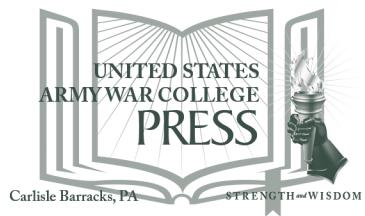


# Officer Corps Strategy Monograph Series

Volume 9



## **STARTING STRONG: TALENT-BASED BRANCHING OF NEWLY COMMISSIONED U.S. ARMY OFFICERS**

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Michael J. Colarusso

Kenneth G. Heckel

David S. Lyle

William L. Skimmyhorn





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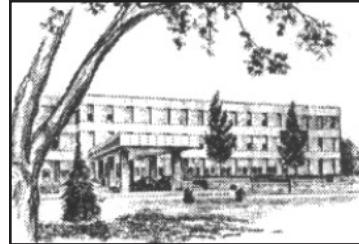
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**Strategic Studies Institute  
and  
U.S. Army War College Press**

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This volume is the 9th in a series of monographs on officer talent management.

8. *Paid to Perform: Aligning total Military Compensation with Talent Management*, June 2015, authored by Mr. Roy W. Wallace, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso, Colonel Andrew O. Hall, Lieutenant Colonel David S. Lyle, Major Michael S. Walker.

7. *Creating an Effective Regional Alignment Strategy for the U.S. Army*, November 2014, authored by Major Raven Bukowski,

Major John Childress, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso, Lieutenant Colonel David S. Lyle.

6. *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Employing Talent*, May 2010, authored by Colonel Casey Wardynski, Lieutenant Colonel David S. Lyle, and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso.

5. *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Developing Talent*, March 2010, authored by Colonel Casey Wardynski, Lieutenant Colonel David S. Lyle, and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso.

4. *Accessing Talent: The Foundation of a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy*, February 2010, authored by Colonel Casey Wardynski, Lieutenant Colonel David S. Lyle, and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso.

3. *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Retaining Talent*, January 2010, authored by Colonel Casey Wardynski, Lieutenant Colonel David S. Lyle, and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso.

2. *Talent: Implications for a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy*, November 2009, authored by Colonel Casey Wardynski, Lieutenant Colonel David S. Lyle, and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso.

1. *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: A Proposed Human Capital Model Focused upon Talent*, April 2009, authored by Colonel Casey Wardynski, Lieutenant Colonel David S. Lyle, and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso.

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## FOREWORD

*Starting Strong* describes the practical application of several officer talent management concepts first presented in a Strategic Studies Institute monograph series from 2009-2010. Moving from human capital theory, data, and analysis, to an operational construct, the monograph details a multi-year pilot of talent-based officer branching practices in the United States Army. The pilot's results were so promising that its approach has since scaled across all Army commissioning sources and is likely to be adopted by the United States Navy and perhaps the other services as well.

The authors of *Starting Strong* work in or with the Army's Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA). They believe that talent management - the science of creating a higher performing, more productive, and more satisfied work force - is critical to creating the military "force of the future" needed to tackle both enduring and emerging national security challenges. They argue that by gathering detailed information on the unique talents possessed by each new officer, as well as on the unique talent demands of each Army basic branch, the Army can create a "talent market" that identifies and liberates the strengths of every officer, placing each into the career field where they are most likely to be engaged, productive, and satisfied leaders.

This workforce optimization methodology has positive implications for long-run officer retention, as well as the cost-savings associated with it. Perhaps most importantly, however, talent-based branching establishes a cognitive and non-cognitive "talent

baseline" for every officer entering the service. This is critical to implementing individual development and employment plans that will maximize the contributions and satisfaction of each throughout their careers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr."

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
Strategic Studies Institute and  
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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MICHAEL J. COLARUSSO is a retired Army lieutenant colonel and senior research analyst in the U.S. Army's Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA). His areas of research interest include organizational design, generational dynamics, human capital, occupational career counseling, and talent management. Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Colarusso holds a B.A. in history from Saint John's University and an M.A. in history from Pennsylvania State University.

KENNETH G. HECKEL is an Army lieutenant colonel who serves as a development officer in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. He is responsible for running the Army's Talent-Based Branching program, and an assistant professor of economics in the Social Sciences Department at West Point. His areas of research interest include higher education administration, occupational career counseling, and talent management. Lieutenant Colonel Heckel holds a B.B.A. in finance from the University of Notre Dame and an M.B.A. from the University of Virginia.

DAVID S. LYLE is an Army colonel, who serves as the Director of OEMA and as a professor of economics in the Social Sciences Department at West Point, where he teaches econometrics and labor economics. His areas of research interest include labor economics, peer effects, human capital, and talent management. Colonel Lyle holds a B.S. from West Point and a Ph.D. in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

WILLIAM L. SKIMMYHORN is an Army lieutenant colonel and serves as the long-term research coordinator for OEMA, and as assistant professor of economics in the Social Sciences Department at West Point. His research interests include behavioral economics and labor economics. Lieutenant Colonel Skimmyhorn holds a B.S. in economics from West Point, a M.A. in international policy and a M.S. in management science and engineering from Stanford University, and a Ph.D. in public policy from Harvard University.

## STARTING STRONG: TALENT-BASED BRANCHING OF NEWLY COMMISSIONED U.S. ARMY OFFICERS

For the better part of 2 centuries, the United States Army has assigned each newly commissioned officer to one of several occupational fields referred to as the “basic branches” (for example, Infantry, Aviation, Armor, etc.). Until very recently, the key determinant of branch assignment was a new officer’s graduating class rank rather than any objective alignment of individual talents with branch talent demands. This was because the Army had little, if any, granular information on its talent supply or demand. Sub-optimal branch assignments often resulted, placing downward pressure on overall officer corps productivity, job satisfaction, and retention. By replacing this almost feudal, top-down, information-starved branching process with regulated market mechanisms, however, the U.S. Army has dramatically improved the information on both sides of the branching decision. Rather than being framed by an influential mentor or peer pressure, lieutenants’ branch preferences are now most powerfully shaped by the unique talent “demand signals” emanating from each branch, as well as by an improved understanding of their own talents. Strong evidence demonstrates that this talent-based approach better aligns officer talent with occupational requirements while increasing individual branch satisfaction.



## PREFACE

*“Change, before you have to.”*

Jack Welch <sup>1</sup>

### **The Army’s Talent Management Pivot.**

While we have collectively published on a variety of human capital topics, our collaborative talent management research has been conducted under the aegis of the Army’s Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA). Founded in 1983 by a forward-looking general named Max Thurman (then the Army’s G1 and later its Assistant Chief of Staff), OEMA’s mission is an enduring one—to help senior leaders create the Army of tomorrow. To that end, OEMA has been a wellspring of what some might refer to as “disruptive thinking” long before the term was in vogue. In our view, disruptive thinking means amalgamating theory, data, and analysis into a sufficiently compelling program or policy design that successfully shifts a bureaucracy’s stultifying patterns of perception. Large, hierarchical, successful organizations are particularly prone to ingrained orthodoxies, which are only reinforced by experience. The Army is older than the nation it serves, and as Luke Williams, Executive Director of Innovation & Entrepreneurship at New York University’s (NYU) Stern School of Business might say, that’s a lot of reinforcement to overcome.<sup>2</sup>

In its 3-plus decades, OEMA has helped devise a host of human resource programs and policies that seemed unthinkable to some in the Army establishment until successfully implemented. Beginning in 2007, however, we began work upon our latest dis-

ruptive idea—talent management. While the Army is now pivoting to talent management, just 8 years ago there was “hair on it,” to quote one general. We were told that talent management’s “focus upon the individual” was antithetical to the culture and values of the Army, that it was too hard, too costly, too cumbersome, too time consuming, and too private sector. “We have a talent management system already,” said one senior officer. “It’s called leader development. The Army is about selfless service, not individual preference.”

These assertions were clearly based upon entrenched patterns of perception. The expectation among most leaders was that the Army would remain the world’s premier land combat force simply by continuing to refine past practices based upon experience. We responded with a fairly straightforward hypothesis—that status quo personnel practices would all but ensure that the Army would someday be unequal to national security demands, because the U.S. military’s long-held advantage in physical capital and equipment was waning, making cutting edge human capital management more critical than ever before.

Any reasonably well-informed person could accept the first part of our argument—the Chinese, Russians, Iranians, and others are all obviously operating much closer to the “mil-tech” frontier than they were just a decade ago. The Russian T-14 Armata main battle tank, the indigenous aircraft carrier plans and stealth fighters of the Chinese, the Iranian ability to hack previously unassailable U.S drones—all clearly demonstrate that a deeply interconnected world is leveling the technological playing field.

Beyond technological mastery, however, near-peer military competitors are demonstrating an advanced

ability to think innovatively, something the United States has long prided itself on. Chinese cyber warfare capability, Russian hybrid warfare in its “near abroad,” the use of both hard and soft power to increase Iranian influence in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen all point to armed forces led by clear thinking, strategically focused, adaptable institutions. Potential adversaries are not just mimicking U.S. technology—they are innovating in human capital management too, something America’s private sector does better than anyone else. And because the United States is a free and open society, those best practices are often just a mouse click away. The U.S. Army needs to avail itself of American workforce management innovations at least as much as potential adversaries if it hopes to retain its ascendancy over them. For the most part, it has not yet done so.

To support that portion of our hypothesis, we presented data highlighting several points concerning personnel trends, particularly in the Army’s officer corps.<sup>3</sup> Officer retention levels were 10-15 percent too low to man the force and had been since the mid-80s. Increased accessions were turned to as a solution, but Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and other critical components of the officer production function had been gutted in the post-Cold War drawdown. As a result, Officer Candidate School (OCS) grew to become the Army’s single largest commissioning source. This massive internal talent poaching (from the Army’s own non-commissioned and warrant officer corps) failed to redress the mid-career commissioned officer shortage. Simultaneously, average platoon leadership time dropped because over-accessions created more lieutenants than the Army had structure to employ. The mid-career officer shortage also caused major and

lieutenant colonel promotion rates to top 90 percent, and promotion timing was compressed as well. Desperate to stop officer talent flight, the Army doled out costly retention bonuses in excess of \$500 million, in large part to officers who intended to stay anyway. The list of mismanagement symptoms continued.<sup>4</sup>

OEMA was not alone in sounding the alarm. Members of Congress, several service and defense secretaries, retired general officers, and a handful of private sector experts in military affairs had also identified critical deficiencies in the Army's industrial-era personnel system. Making matters worse, accelerating changes in the American labor market were exacerbating these problems. No longer focused upon physical labor, the high-tech, service-centric, Information Age economy which emerged in the 1980s demanded a far higher share of "knowledge workers," people who add value and increase productivity through creative thinking and innovation, the very type of leaders the Army both needs and creates. The relatively limited supply of these workers made talent poaching standard practice in the labor market, and as the officer retention problem illustrated, the Army was as vulnerable as any other employer. Today's knowledge workers are not content to stay with one employer for 20-30 years. They value steady employability far more than steady employment, and they are willing to routinely change jobs to secure greater rewards.

This new reality created a talent management market opportunity, so to speak. While sound data analysis had revealed several flaws in the Army's outmoded personnel system, this alone did not ignite the pivot to talent management. That began only when senior leaders directed our office, in collaboration with the Army G1, the Army Research Institute, U.S.

Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), and other agencies to introduce and pilot several initiatives that collectively could serve as the pillars of a revolution in military personnel matters—a talent management system for the United States Army.<sup>5</sup>

The expectation of the naysayers was that talent management would engender selfish rather than selfless service, and that the desires of the individual would trump the needs of the Army. As talent-based branching demonstrates, however, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, some legacy practices were actually more likely to have this effect. Where in the world, for example, does an employer unilaterally surrender its hiring authority to employees? Until 2012, one answer was in the Army's commissioned officer corps, where new lieutenants would select their branch based upon their "order of merit list" (OML) standing, while the branch had no voice whatsoever in the "hiring" decision. With today's talent-based approach, however, each branch now determines who it will hire by clearly articulating the unique talents demanded in its workforce. Talent, not class standing, is the final arbiter, and the organization, not the individual, gains the greater leverage in labor contract negotiations.

It is this type of revelation that has slowly yet inexorably torn down preconceived notions about talent management. Today's Army leaders understand that talent management is not a zero sum game. By cultivating and liberating the unique talents of every individual, talent management better meets the needs of the entire Army. It develops, employs, and rewards a multiplicity of abilities across an entire work force rather than focusing upon a narrow distribution of perceived high performers. This deep and broad talent

inventory is the single best way to mitigate the risks of an uncertain threat environment and an increasingly competitive labor market.

To its credit, the Army has now embraced talent management and is in many ways leading its roll-out within the Department of Defense. Talent-based branching is but one example of that leadership. The pages that follow explain why it is a critical and necessary component of the Army's force of the future. There is still time to ensure that our force is more capable than any other, and onboarding officers into optimal career fields is a great way to "start strong."

## INTRODUCTION

“The buried talent is the sunken rock on which most lives strike and founder.”

Frederick William Faber <sup>6</sup>

### **The Case for Talent-Based Branching.**

Perhaps the most critical juncture in a young officer’s career occurs prior to commissioning, when the Army assigns each to 1 of 17 highly specialized career fields referred to as “basic branches” (Infantry, Armor, Intelligence, Ordnance, etc.). It is not hard to imagine how an officer might be a better talent match for one branch than another, as each does decidedly different work. Army workforce productivity, therefore, turns in large part upon this initial allocation of officers to branches.<sup>7</sup> Given the limited ability of Army officers to change their basic branches, poor initial matches also have significant implications for individual officer career satisfaction and thus retention beyond the initial Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO).<sup>8</sup>

With so much at stake for both the organization and the individual, the Army has recently piloted a market-based branching mechanism, designed to align basic branch talent demands with the talent supply resident in each newly commissioned officer population. Before delving into the benefits of talent-based branching, a review of previous branching practices can help illustrate why change was so necessary.

## **The Legacy Approach.**

Legacy branching was employed across the Army's primary commissioning sources - the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), the United States Military Academy (West Point), and the Officer Candidate School (OCS). While it varied somewhat by source of commission, a unifying feature was that cadets and officer candidates rank ordered their preferences by the available basic branches. The Army then assigned each a branch based upon their ordinal class ranking, preferences, gender (at the time, some branches were still closed to women), and the number of new officers required by each branch. Regardless of commissioning source, ordinal rankings were based upon a weighted average of several quantifiable performance areas (principally military, physical, and academic).

The problems inherent in this approach were legion. First, the final branching decision for each officer was made not by their prospective employer—the branch—but by a central authority. In fact, while the employee (new lieutenant) had some voice in the employment decision, the employer had none.

Second, the branches, as prospective employers, did little to differentiate themselves from one another. Each hoped to attract “the best” new officers, which they viewed as those at the top of the ordinal ranking. As “best” was measured in terms of military, physical, and academic prowess, branches tended to uniformly emphasize their need for “shooters, movers, and communicators.” As a result, Department of the Army Pamphlet (600-3), one of the few sources from which a prospective officer could glean a branch’s talent demand signal, was chock full of branches touting their need for “physically fit, mentally agile, warrior

leaders of character,” whether the branch was the Adjutant General Corps, Military Police, or Air Defense Artillery. The pamphlet contained little information beyond these normative baseline requirements for officership.

Third, this lack of powerful, differentiated demand signals from the branches often engendered a “follow the herd” mentality in soon-to-be-commissioned officers. For example, at West Point in the 1980s there was outsized pressure upon cadets to branch into the Corps of Engineers, whereas more recently the institutional pressure has shifted toward maneuver, fires, and effects (MFE) branches, particularly Infantry. With no real understanding of their own talents or those in demand, cadets often succumbed to this relatively uninformed decisionmaking. They “wanted” a particular branch, but, when asked why, they often had difficulty articulating an answer. A cadet, for example, might have sought and received assignment to the Field Artillery, not because he was spatially intelligent and could think rapidly in three dimensions, but because his father and grandfather had served in the artillery, his best friend was branching artillery, an admired military instructor had repeatedly extolled the virtues of “the King of Battle,” etc. If the cadet was an optimal fit for the branch, it was due to luck rather than sound policy and practice.

Fourth, as legacy branching was built around ordinal class ranking, the higher a future officer’s grade point average (GPA), the more likely she or he was to receive their branch of choice. This encouraged cadets to pursue less rigorous academic programs to boost their class rank (since, prior to 2013, ranking was not weighted by institutional or major degree of difficulty). For example, since 2010, 15 percent of all

ROTC graduates commissioned into the active duty Army have been criminal justice majors.<sup>9</sup> Statistics from West Point indicate that their cadets employed a similar strategy when selecting an academic major. A case in point: those wishing to branch Engineer would often pursue less difficult, non-ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) accredited degrees in order to secure a higher class ranking.<sup>10</sup>

Fifth, minorities were potentially disadvantaged by an OML-centric branching process with academic rank as one of its pillars. While possessing the exact same levels and distribution of native intelligences and talents present among their peers, socio-economic disadvantages often meant that minority students undertook university-level education with less adequate academic preparation at the junior high or high school level. As a result, some tended to have lower college GPAs. This in turn narrowed their branch choices, with many ending up concentrated in non-MFE branches such as Transportation, Ordnance, Chemical, etc. This need not be the case, as no group has a monopoly on the talents demanded across all the branches based on their demographics.

Lastly, the legacy branching system had no mechanism for aligning domain-specific education with the highly specialized work done by each of its 17 basic branches. Imagine a civilian university system where the communications majors seek employment with Pfizer while the chemistry majors look for jobs with NBC. This is more or less what occurred quite regularly in the Army. This misalignment also caused undergraduate expertise, often paid for by the Army, to rapidly atrophy – “what you don’t use, you lose.”

## A New Approach.

The most powerful argument for talent-based branching is to optimize workforce productivity—to create a bigger bang for the taxpayer’s buck. Markets are the most efficient transactional mechanism yet devised, and talent-based branching is not unlike the job market operating across civilian college campuses each year. Just as in that market, college students (new Army officers) prepare resumes while prospective employers (branches) articulate job requirements in an effort to attract best-fit job candidates. As each side of the market reviews the information provided by the other, some market clearing naturally takes place—new officers determine which branch is a best-fit for their talents while branches determine which officers are a best-fit for the work that they do.

Talent-based branching does differ from a college job market in some important ways, however. Of necessity, it is a more tightly regulated labor market.<sup>11</sup> As such, it provides limited direct communication between the two principals to the transaction (the employee and employer), and it employs an agent in the form of a “branching board” to ensure the market clears in a way consistent with Army needs. Importantly, the branching board does not arbitrarily assign cadets to branches. Rather, it intervenes only when the market process has failed to meet the Army branches’ talent requirements or to improve a cadet’s talent match.<sup>12</sup>

Concurrent with improved career matches, talent-based branching helps the Army to identify, collect, quantify, and store data about the diverse talents resident in its junior officer workforce, critical to optimizing both their future employment and development.

This talent data goes far beyond the old academic-military-physical triad of the legacy branching system. At West Point, for example, cadets participate in countless experiences that reveal and develop unique talents, including study abroad, foreign military training and travel, cadet clubs and activities, athletic competitions, specialized academic projects, a variety of military training schools, and community service projects. New ROTC and OCS officers have similar experiences. It is the fullness of these life experiences to include friendships, hobbies, leisure travel, and even cultural, religious, and familial connections, that builds unique productive potential in every person.

Until the advent of talent-based branching, the Army captured very little of this information. Official personnel information systems recorded general accounting information on prospective officers: date of birth, ethnicity, height, weight, blood type, religious preference, academic majors, validated language proficiencies, and skills imparted via commissioning programs. Most of this information has little connection to productive potential. The myriad other experiences that might develop and signal particular talents remained hidden and would thus lie fallow for the officer's entire career, never leveraged by the Army unless they accidentally bubbled to the surface. This is unfortunate, as new accessions are the quickest way to fill potential talent gaps in a workforce. Knowing which talents you want and then acquiring them is far less time consuming than developing them from scratch. Before shopping for talent, however, it is critical to understand what it really is.

## TALENT-BASED BRANCHING

*“Nature arms each man with some faculty which enables him to do easily some feat impossible to any other.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson <sup>13</sup>

### Talent Taxonomy.

As we mentioned in our preface, talent-based branching represents the practical application of talent management concepts first articulated in 2009-2010 by the Army's Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis. As we described it then, talent:

...is the intersection of three dimensions—skills, knowledge, and behaviors—that create an optimal level of individual performance, provided the individual is employed within his or her talent set. We believe that all people have talent which can be identified and liberated, and that they can dramatically and continuously extend their talent advantage if properly incentivized, developed, and employed.<sup>14</sup>

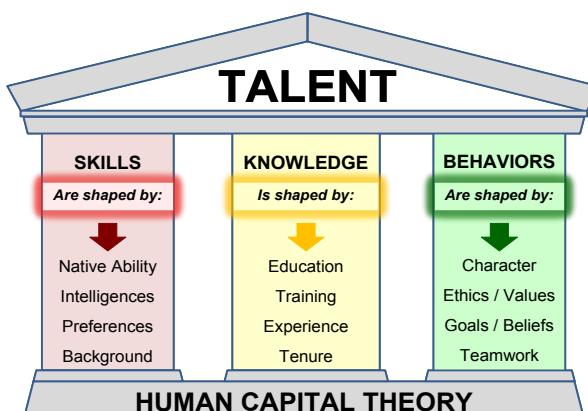


Figure 1. The Dimensions of Individual Talent.

Skills can range from broadly conceptual or intuitive, to deeply technical. As noted developmental psychologist and Nobel laureate Howard Gardner points out, people tend to manifest a proclivity for skills development most powerfully in the fields to which their native intelligences draw them.<sup>15</sup> For example, a person with a high degree of “logical-mathematical” intelligence may be drawn to civil engineering, where they will be able to think conceptually, learn rapidly, and respond effectively to unanticipated challenges, just as a peer with highly developed “linguistic” intelligence might perform in the field of journalism. If these people exchange professions, however, their productivity may plunge.

The acquisition of knowledge represents the further development of a person’s native intelligences, and thus an extension of their talent advantage. While some knowledge is acquired via training and life experience, education provides the largest knowledge lift because it also bolsters mental agility and conceptual thinking. It allows people to extract greater knowledge from their life experiences. Education teaches people how to think, not what to think. They more rapidly assess unanticipated situations and formulate courses of action leading to desired outcomes.

Lastly, professions require not just technical and cognitive skills, but also behavior (values, ethics, attitudes, and attributes) that “fits” their culture. While the Army’s seven official values (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage) are the most visible, its moral calling demands dozens of others. In particular, “teamwork behavior” is identified in both the *National Military Strategy* and the *Army Capstone Concept* as critical to the creation of a highly adaptable military profession. Teamwork,

the ability to respectfully share goals and knowledge with others, leads to rapid problem solving.

As a companion to this taxonomy, we defined talent management as an overarching set of human resource/human capital management processes designed to extract the most productivity and value from an organization's greatest asset—its people. Talent management focuses upon every person in an organization (its entire distribution of people), not just a perceived “upper tier” of performers. It gets a higher percentage of the right people in the right place at the right time, the likelihood of which improves if they begin their careers in the right field, the obvious goal of talent-based branching.

### **Talent-Based Branching Operating Concept.**

Talent-based branching has three discrete phases, each of which plays a critical role in aligning a cadet's unique talents with the branch where they are most likely to excel. As it scales across the Army's commissioning sources, the particulars of its execution are being adjusted to allow for differences in officer production timelines, available resources, etc. Nonetheless, the principles undergirding the talent-based approach are being applied by West Point, ROTC, and OCS. In our following discussion of the operating concept, we will refer primarily to the design first piloted at West Point, as it is the most mature example among the three commissioning sources.<sup>16</sup>

***Phase I: Branch Education and Mentorship.*** This phase serves two purposes—to formally educate cadets regarding branch talent demands, and to gather detailed talent information on every cadet in support of branch assignments.

As we alluded to earlier, prior to talent-based branching, a cadet's branch preferences were shaped by a variety of factors such as family tradition, institutional or peer pressure, a respected mentor, even popular culture (think *Hurt Locker*, *Blackhawk Down*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Call of Duty*, etc.). Today, however, cadets engage in a robust branch education and mentorship program which begins the moment they arrive at West Point. Branch talent "storyboards" detail the specific native intelligences, skills, knowledge, and behaviors demanded by each of the 17 basic branches, not just for lieutenants but for all career officers. This requires cadets to explicitly envision their service over a longer time horizon and implicitly requires them to consider the consequences of a bad initial branch fit.

As Figure 2 illustrates, each branch storyboard sends a powerful yet differentiated talent demand signal to each cadet, something previously lacking from the branching process.<sup>17</sup> Storyboards also frame discussions between cadets and mentors of the deeper meaning behind each branch's demands. Each year, branch commandants develop and certify their storyboards. After approval by the Commander of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, the Army G1 distributes them to the commissioning sources.<sup>18</sup>

Referring again to Figure 2, in addition to identifying a branch's best-fit intelligences (grey field), each storyboard provides a narrative discussion of the particular skills (pink field) that their officers will have to develop and call upon throughout their careers in the branch. Storyboards then present examples of any relevant educational background, training, or experience that would provide an officer with the knowledge (blue field) needed to excel in the branch. Several branches, such as the Corps of Engineers, for example, place a particular emphasis upon domain specific education.



# Engineer

## INTELLIGENCES: Interpersonal, Logical-Mathematical, Spatial

**SKILLS:** Engineer officers must possess an innate ability to evaluate and assess problems, the resident knowledge to brainstorm possibilities, and then quickly implement solutions to solve problems facing our maneuver commanders. This requires a design mindset – the ability to develop tasks and work processes for teams and motivate those teams to reach harmoniously, efficiently, and effectively desired outcomes. Officers must thrive in the world of abstract concepts and data-based reasoning, be able to discriminate and filter information of importance, and be capable of rapid visualization; all while skillfully possessing the ability to communicate concepts verbally or in writing. Collectively, these skills make Engineer officers superb problem solvers and invaluable to our Army and Nation.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Engineer branch strongly desires officers with academic backgrounds in the domain-specific disciplines listed below, with particular emphasis on degrees that are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). These disciplines provide officers with a foundation in the scientific method that enhances their ability to become expert problem solvers.

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 1:** ABET Engineering Majors (Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Systems, Environmental, Chemical, Nuclear, Engineering Management, Computer Science, Information Technology).

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 2:** Non-ABET Engineering; Science, Technology, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 3:** All other disciplines.

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING/EXPERIENCE:** Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT) with Engineer Unit or Academic Enrichment Program in engineering or related activity (not all inclusive).

## BEHAVIORS: (In addition to foundational)

➤ ADAPTABLE	➤ DEPENDABLE	➤ INNOVATIVE	➤ PROACTIVE
➤ AMBITIOUS	➤ DETAILED FOCUSED	➤ INSPIRING	➤ PROBLEM SOLVING
➤ CHARISMATIC	➤ DILIGENT	➤ INTELLECTUALLY CURIOUS	➤ TENACIOUS
➤ COMMITTED	➤ EXPERT	➤ PERCEPTIVE	➤ VISIONARY

## TALENT PRIORITIES:

1. **DOMAIN-SPECIFIC EDUCATION:** Possessing an engineering degree (ABET-preferred), high performers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines.
2. **PROJECT MANAGER:** Able to determine requirements, develop work processes, delegate responsibilities, and lead teams to desired outcomes.
3. **PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
4. **INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:** Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal.
5. **SPATIALLY INTELLIGENT:** Easily perceives, understands, and operates within the multi-dimensional world.

Figure 2. Engineer Branch Storyboard.

Other branches, such as the Field Artillery, Armor, and Infantry, prefer a broader distribution of academic disciplines, creating a more interdisciplinary community within their branches.

Next, each branch provides a list of critical behaviors (yellow field) suiting an officer to each branch, with the understanding that these are above and beyond the non-negotiable, normative baseline level of behaviors demanded of every commissioned officer.<sup>19</sup> As an example, while all officers must be physically fit, four branches place an outsized emphasis upon fitness (Armor, Field Artillery, Infantry, and Military Police), demanding an almost “professional athlete” level of strength, endurance and agility to ensure success in the branch.

Lastly, the storyboards distill all of the previously stated into the five or six particular talent priorities of each branch in a particular year (green field). These priorities are dynamic and can change from year to year based upon the talents already resident in a branch’s officer corps, as well as changing missions, doctrine, equipment, or threats. These talent priorities send a clear and unambiguous demand signal to cadets and officer candidates considering each branch.

When aggregating the latest talent priorities of all 17 basic branches, 20 particular talents emerged. The matrix at Figure 3 captures these talents, which serve as the foundation for the cadet talent assessments which take place in Phase II of the branching process. As the figure illustrates, while there are some talents in particularly high demand across several branches, there is also a high degree of heterogeneity, with no single talent in demand by more than 10 branches. A closer look also reveals that there are closer talent correlations among maneuver branches (for example, Infantry and Armor), just as there are among logistics

and sustainment branches (such as Quartermaster, Ordnance, etc.).

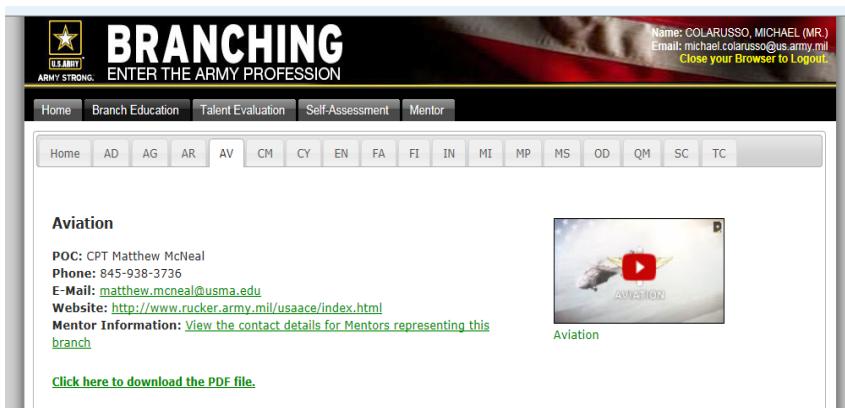
Talent Demand	AD	AG	AR	AV	CM	CY	EN	FA	FM	IN	MI	MP	MS	OD	EOD	QM	SC	TC	TOTAL
Communicator	1	1	1		1				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	
Cross-Culturally Fluent	1								1								1	3	
Detail-Focused									1									3	
Domain-Specific Education	1			1	1	1		1		1								5	
Innovative	1		1	1			1										1	5	
Inspirational Leader	1			1	1												1	6	
Interdisciplinary			1			1				1								5	
Interpersonal	1	1	1							1	1	1						6	
Logically Analytical	1	1		1			1		1		1						1	7	
Mentally Tough		1	1	1			1		1		1							5	
Multi-Tasker	1	1	1	1			1		1		1							8	
Perceptive	1			1				1	1		1							5	
Physically Fit		1				1		1		1		1						4	
Problem Solver		1	1	1	1			1		1	1	1					1	11	
Process Disciplined							1	1			1							3	
Project Manager							1	1			1	1						5	
Prudent Risk Taker	1	1									1							3	
Spatially Intelligent		1			1	1												3	
Bodily-Kinesthetic									1			1						2	
Technologically Adept										1						1	2		

Figure 3. Talent Requirement Matrix by Branch.<sup>20</sup>

As a companion educational tool, the Army has created a branching website where cadets and officer candidates can explore the latest branch talent demands as they try to ascertain their branch preferences. As Figure 4 indicates, this website not only provides cadets with each branch's storyboard, but also with branch-specific links and contact information.

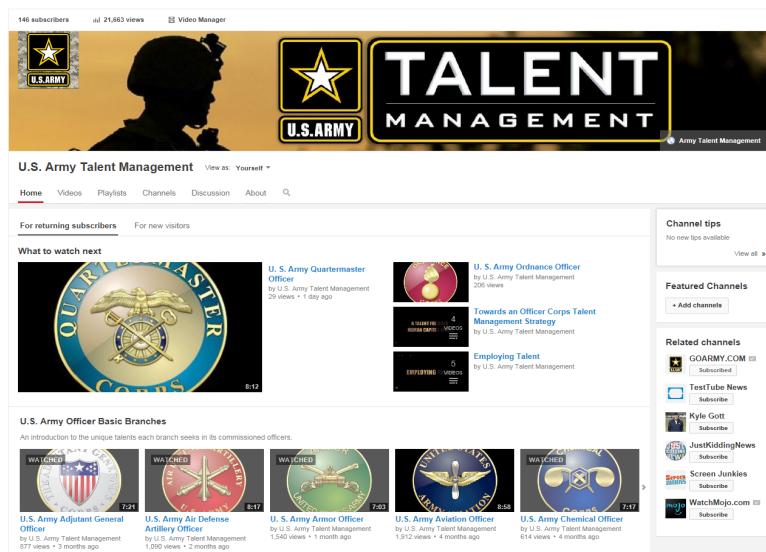
Of particular importance, each storyboard is translated into a branch video of approximately 8-10 minutes in length. Each video presents the history and mission of a branch, the officer talents it currently demands, and provides supporting discussions by several officers (often from lieutenant to colonel), explaining why and how each talent will serve a leader seeking a career in the branch.<sup>21</sup> For commissioning sources such as ROTC and OCS in particular (which have very small officer cadres at each location), the opportunity for cadets and candidates to hear from over 110 officers across all the basic branches is invaluable. As Figure 5 shows, these videos are also available for direct viewing on the Army's Talent Management video channel. This provides the added benefit of reaching prospective officers still outside the Army, and viewing statistics indicate that thousands of people are visiting the channel weekly.

The creation of powerful talent demand signals is only half of the Phase I branching equation. In order to make good use of this information as they formulate their branch preferences, cadets must also learn about themselves. Because officership is such a restless profession, and because cadets and officer candidates tend to be overscheduled, hyper-busy young people, introspection tends not to be their strong suit. Even for those that are by nature introspective, until now they have lacked the self-assessment tools needed



The screenshot shows the 'Aviation' branch page of the Army Branching website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Branch Education, Talent Evaluation, Self-Assessment, and Mentor. Below the navigation bar is a horizontal menu with links for Home, AD, AG, AR, AV, CM, CY, EN, FA, FI, IN, MI, MP, MS, OD, QM, SC, and TC. The main content area features a section titled 'Aviation' with contact information for the POC (CPT Matthew McNeal), phone number (845-938-3736), email (matthew.mcneal@usma.edu), and website (<http://www.rucker.army.mil/usaace/index.html>). It also includes a link to 'Mentor Information' and a 'Click here to download the PDF file.' link. To the right, there is a video player showing a video titled 'AVIATION' with a play button and a thumbnail image of an aircraft.

Figure 4. Screen Capture from the Army's Branching Website.



The screenshot shows the YouTube channel page for 'U.S. Army Talent Management'. The channel has 146 subscribers and 21,683 views. The main banner features a silhouette of a soldier and the text 'TALENT MANAGEMENT'. Below the banner, there are sections for 'For returning subscribers' and 'For new visitors'. A 'What to watch next' section displays several video thumbnails, including 'U.S. Army Quartermaster Officer', 'U.S. Army Ordnance Officer', 'U.S. Army Chemical Officer', and 'U.S. Army Aviation Officer'. The right sidebar includes 'Channel tips', 'Featured Channels', and 'Related channels' sections, which list channels like GOARMY.COM, YouTube News, Kyle Gott, JustKiddingNews, Screen Junkies, and WatchMojo.com.

Figure 5. The Army Talent Management Video Channel.

to determine whether their individual talent “supply” meets the “demand” of the branches they are considering.

To rectify this, the Army created an online resume and self-assessment toolset inside its branching website. The site itself is designed to tease out, through self-reporting, any unique talents that might otherwise remain hidden. As cadets create their resumes, they mine the fullness of their life experiences for details ranging from specific academic interests, hobbies, military and leadership experiences, extracurricular activities, sports, memberships and associations, volunteer work, leisure travel, and anything else that may demonstrate strength in the 20 or so talents in demand across the basic branches.

Cadets also provide an initial 1-thru-17 listing of their branch preferences, with a written statement explaining why they believe they are suitable for their top picks. This statement drives introspection—cadets must try to demonstrate a correlation between their actual talents and those demanded by the branches they prefer. They know that their preference statements may be reviewed later by the branching board, and this knowledge discourages preference gaming. Simply declaring “I’m a great match for branch X because I possess all the talents they want” will fail to persuade the board unless backed up with some evidence of “fit.” The managed market also promotes participation through a credible negative incentive; cadets who fail to provide talent information are more likely to receive branch assignments that do not reflect their preferences.<sup>22</sup>

During this branching phase, cadets must next complete a proctored, 3-hour “Talent Assessment Battery” or “TAB,” designed to measure the cognitive and non-cognitive skills, knowledge and behaviors of each

relative to their peers and across the branches' talent demands. The TAB was jointly developed by OEMA and the Army Research Institute (ARI), with additional support from West Point's Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership (BS&L), and other top scholars in the fields of personality and career suitability assessment. The TAB and the resulting feedback help each cadet refine his or her branch preferences while simultaneously providing critical information to the branch board during its final deliberations.<sup>23</sup>

TAB results (see the sample at Figure 6) employ carefully selected feedback language designed to minimize "test rejection" and encourage cadets to interpret the results with development and growth in mind. They are presented in "percentile" format (expressed as an individual's ranking within their peer population).<sup>24</sup> For example, a cadet might place in the 90th percentile for "mentally tough," meaning that 9 out of 10 peers scored below her.

Army mentors work with cadets to help them interpret and understand their scores, which, despite careful presentation, can sometimes be a bit of a shock. After all, up to this point in their lives none of them have had their self-perceptions challenged by a test, and they were rarely ranked against others with similarly high levels of talent.<sup>25</sup> When mentors help interpret the results by weighing them against what they have observed in the cadet, it goes a long way toward increasing a TAB report's credibility and thus utility to each.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to self-assessments and TAB results, commissioning source cadre observations are a critical third source of cadet talent information. A cadre member prepares a "Cadet / Candidate Talent Evaluation (CTE)" on every future officer, providing an experienced leader's observations across all 20 talent dimensions to both cadets and the branching board.<sup>27</sup>

#### Talent Assessment Feedback:

You recently completed the Talent Assessment as part of your branching process. The Talent Assessment consists of a number of cognitive and non-cognitive evaluations that identify and measure your unique talents. The Talent Assessment plays an important role in the branching process in two ways. First, the Talent Assessment enables the Army to provide you with personalized feedback on your talent strengths and weaknesses. Second, the Talent Assessment enables the Army to understand better your talents and to align your branch assignment with your unique talents. In this effort the Talent Assessment is used in conjunction with a review of your cadet file and talent evaluations from senior leaders. You should carefully consider your Talent Assessment results as an important indicator of your talent strengths, recognizing it is only one composite measure.

Your own personal talents are derived from the intersection of the skills you possess and develop, the knowledge you gain, and the behaviors you learn over time. As you prepare to enter the Profession of Arms, identify and reflect on these unique talents to assist you in determining the best path to follow. To succeed in this endeavor, it is not necessary for you to be exceptional in every aspect. Rather, it is more important for you to excel while using the unique talents you possess.

We highlight below your results for the 20 talents as measured by the Talent Assessment. For each talent, you are provided an assessment relative to the other members of your class. This feedback reports the percentile in which you scored, relative to your peers.

When reviewing these results, keep in mind a few items. First, talents are not fixed attributes. They may be improved over time with a commitment to continuous personal and professional development. Second, the Talent Assessment is only one measure of your demonstration of a particular talent. The Cadet File and the Cadet Talent Evaluation also serve as useful measures of your talents.

We encourage you to discuss this Talent Assessment with your mentors as you continue to determine where you might best fit in your service to the Army.

Talent	Definition	Percentile (n <sup>th</sup> )
BODILY KINESTHETIC	Coordinated, dexterous, hands-on person. Keen sense of body and sensory awareness. Learns through physical activity.	28
COMMUNICATOR	Precise, efficient, and compelling in both written and spoken word.	<= 25
CROSS-CULTURALLY FLUENT	Aware of and able to operate across different cultural settings (e.g., organizational, demographic, ethnographic, and generational).	90
DETAIL-FOCUSED	Thorough, perceptive and precise in all matters. Possesses a keen eye - notices everything.	<= 25
INNOVATIVE	Creative, inquisitive and insightful. Easily identifies new solutions and catalyzes change.	46
INSPIRATIONAL LEADER	Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal.	45
INTERDISCIPLINARY	Integrates and applies expert knowledge from multiple disciplines into a coherent overarching perspective.	57
INTERPERSONAL	Skilled in developing appropriate relationships. Able to connect with others to effect positive results.	42
INTROSPECTIVE	Contemplative by nature - self-aware.	61
LOGICAL / ANALYTICAL	Uses reason and thinks in terms of cause and effect. Able to decompose and solve complex problems.	<= 25
MENTALLY TOUGH	Stress tolerant and emotionally mature. Performs well even under extreme psychological duress.	<= 25
MULTI-TASKER	Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.	61
PERCEPTIVE	Effectively discerns the deeper meaning or significance of one's observations (e.g., events, people and communication).	<= 25
PHYSICALLY FIT	Physically tough, gritty and tenacious. Performs well even under extreme physiological duress. Committed to a lifestyle of physical fitness.	31
PROBLEM SOLVER	Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.	<= 25
PROCESS DISCIPLINED	Diligently abides by procedures designed to ensure accuracy, effectiveness and safety.	<= 25
PROJECT MANAGER	Able to determine requirements, develop work processes, delegate responsibilities, and lead teams to desired outcomes.	56
PRUDENT RISK TAKER	Acts boldly yet maintains appropriate focus upon personal, Soldier, and unit safety.	50
SPATIALLY INTELLIGENT	Easily perceives, understands and operates within the multi-dimensional world.	37
TECHNOLOGICALLY ADEPT	Understands and comfortably uses the latest technologies.	84

**Figure 6. Sample Phase 1 TAB Feedback Report.**

This third layer of feedback on a cadet's unique talent provides each with an outside perspective from a leader who has served in the Army, and who also serves as the cadet's first line supervisor.

In summary, the first phase of talent-based branching collects and distributes valuable information to and from cadets / officer candidates with the goal of generating well-informed branch preferences. This phase culminates with the future officers submitting an interim set of branch preferences, a "snapshot" of their interest in each branch prior to entering the next phase of the process.

***Phase II: Integrative Talent Assessment and Branch Recommendations.*** In Phase II, an experienced, independent team of human resource professionals reviews every cadet's full profile (resume, TAB scores, and cadre evaluations) and provides an integrated, multi-perspective talent assessment of each. This assessment is compared to each branch's talent demands and generates a list of "best-fit" options (typically from four to eight branches, contingent upon an individual's talent profile). For example, a cadet scoring high in the talents of physically fit, mentally tough, and innovative might receive Infantry as a best-fit branch recommendation. Meanwhile, a cadet with an appropriate domain specific education degree (e.g., Computer Science) with high scores in technologically adept and logical-analytical might receive Cyber as a best-fit branch recommendation. As the sample in Figure 7 highlights, these Army recommendations are not binding. They simply provide additional feedback to cadets, who can use it to reflect upon and refine their branch preferences should they choose to do so.

**Army G-1 Branch Recommendations:**

As you can see from our enclosed recommendations, we find a good correlation between your current branch preferences and the talents demanded by those branches. This means you've done a solid self-assessment. Of course, there are other cadets who are strong talent matches for the branches you prefer, which means competition will exist. This shouldn't discourage you or cause you to reorder your top three preferences, but you may want to think more about your "top five" branches in the event that competition is tight for your top three. The branch recommendations we've enclosed here should help you to do this. We have one goal - to get you in the branch that's best for you and for the Army.

**Best Fit Branches (in rank order)**

Engineers  
Military Police  
Field Artillery  
Armor  
Infantry  
Army Aviation

**Figure 7. Sample Talent-Based Branch Recommendations to a Cadet.**

As cadets discuss these branch recommendations and their evolving preferences with cadre and mentors (from organizations around the Academy and the Army), the 17 basic branches are simultaneously reviewing the full talent profiles of all cadets. Branch commandant review teams weigh each cadet's talents and preferences to determine whether they would be a good fit for their branch.<sup>28</sup> They then signal their interest in each cadet to the branching board via a five-point Likert-scale recommendation, ranging from "must select" to "do not select." While the new branching model breaks from the old in many ways, this particular feature embodies the sea-change represented by talent-based branching. For the first time, the employer (branches) has a voice in hiring junior executives (lieutenants), a critical but heretofore missing component of an efficiently functioning labor market.

Phase II concludes once the branching board receives final preference feedback from all basic branches and final branch preferences from all cadets.<sup>29</sup> With

both the supply and demand sides of the labor market “locked in,” the branching board’s work can begin in earnest.

***Phase III: Branch Assignments.*** Final talent-based branch assignments actually begin by using the legacy ordinal ranking (OML) process to initially align cadets to branches (recall that under that system, the higher a cadet’s OML ranking, the more likely they were to receive their branch of choice).<sup>30</sup> What has changed, however, is how branch preferences are shaped. In the past, cadets did not have the benefit of participating in a robust information market to make truly informed career decisions. Today they draw upon the full breadth and depth of information generated by talent-based branching: powerful labor demand signals rather than institutional pressure or hearsay; formal introspection time, tools, and feedback mechanisms; and enhanced mentorship opportunities. This shifts preferences in a way that ultimately improves branch assignment satisfaction.

Some readers may wonder why it is even necessary to solicit branch preferences from future officers—why not use testing and observation to validate their talents and assign them to the right branches accordingly, rather than investing so much effort into a comprehensive branch education effort? First, by soliciting branch preferences, the Army is signaling its desire to be transparent and to collaborate with and create a truly engaged workforce, a critical component of talent management. Perhaps more importantly, however, well-informed preferences are important predictors of individual talent potential.

An individual’s preferences are merely the ordering of alternatives based upon the relative happiness or satisfaction they can provide, also referred to as

“utility.” Rational choice theory posits that individuals make choices with the goal of maximizing their utility. In a labor market context, utility stems from both financial and intrinsic rewards. Since all newly commissioned officers receive virtually the same pay and benefits, their branch preferences are more heavily shaped by intrinsic rewards—perhaps a sense of belonging, perceived opportunities for advancement and, most certainly, a strong perception that one is a good talent match for a particular branch. Strong matches mean that new officers are more likely to enjoy and excel in their work, thus increasing their utility over time. In other words, the three-phases of talent-based branching help ensure that a cadet’s final branch preferences are mature and useful talent predictors.

While this process dramatically increases the likelihood of talent alignment between newly commissioned officers and branches, no market in the world, regardless of how efficient, clears perfectly. That is why the branching board—composed of senior Army officers—reviews, validates, and adjusts assignments only as needed to ensure that cadet talents are optimized and branch needs are met. In determining whether to adjust a cadet’s final branch of choice, the board reviews the entirety of information collected over the year-long branch education and mentorship program. The review is a blind one—the board cannot see any cadet’s personally identifiable information (PII). Their deliberations focus not upon race, ethnicity, or gender, but talent. This approach is far more likely to yield better labor matches while maintaining or improving cadet satisfaction.<sup>31</sup>

In very special circumstances, the branching board may also consider additional sources of talent supply

or demand information. For example, the newly established Cyber branch uses interviews with cadets enrolled in the West Point Cyber Leader Development Program (CLDP) to screen cadets seeking to serve in Cyber. The branching board considers these interviews, in addition to all other talent information, to confirm selection of the first 21 Cyber lieutenants in the Army. Similarly, Ordnance branch conducts on-campus interviews to identify 30 cadets who are best qualified for the particularly high stress field of Explosive Ordnance Disposal. These examples of enhancing the talent demand signal during the branching process serve as a model that other branches may emulate as talent-based branching continues to mature.

### **Talent-Based Branching - Piloting Data.**

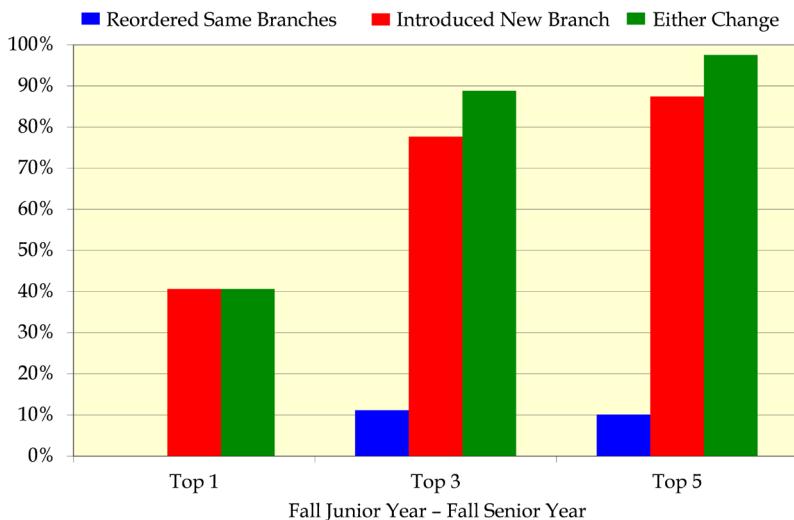
In accordance with the operating concept we just described, piloting occurred at West Point with approximately 3,000 cadets from the Classes of 2013, 2014, and 2015.<sup>32</sup> Results indicate that the program did in fact increase cadet-branch talent matches, as measured by the alignment of cadet talent with branch-specific talent requirements, cadet preferences, and survey findings on cadets' satisfaction with the new program. While long-term, post commissioning officer performance data is required to empirically assess the quality of talent matches made, we can report some preliminary findings.<sup>33</sup>

A review of behavior over the first three phases indicates that participation in a robust talent information market caused cadets to significantly shift their preferences over a short period of time. The proportion of preference shifts illustrates the power of markets in both revealing and conveying information.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of cadets in the West Point Classes of 2013-2015 who changed their top one, top three, or top five branch preferences after being exposed to the branch talent priorities, talking to mentors, and receiving valuable feedback from the multiple assessments. Some key points:

- Across all three classes, roughly 40 percent of cadets changed their top branch preference over the year-long program.
- Nearly 90 percent changed at least one of their top three branch preferences and 97 percent changed at least one of their top five branch preferences.
- Interestingly, most of these preference changes in the top three and top five categories were the result of cadets considering new branches to which they might be better suited, rather than merely reordering their existing branch preferences.

One question the reader may immediately ask is how all this preference shifting to meet Army talent demands affected cadet satisfaction, as “Army needs” is often interpreted as a tradeoff resulting in dissatisfied cadets. Interestingly though, satisfaction improved, with 80 percent of cadets receiving their top branch choice compared to 77 percent for graduating classes from the last 4 years of the legacy branching model. This three percentage point improvement is statistically significant, suggests a higher career satisfaction rate, and is a testament to the efficacy of informed preference generation.<sup>34</sup>

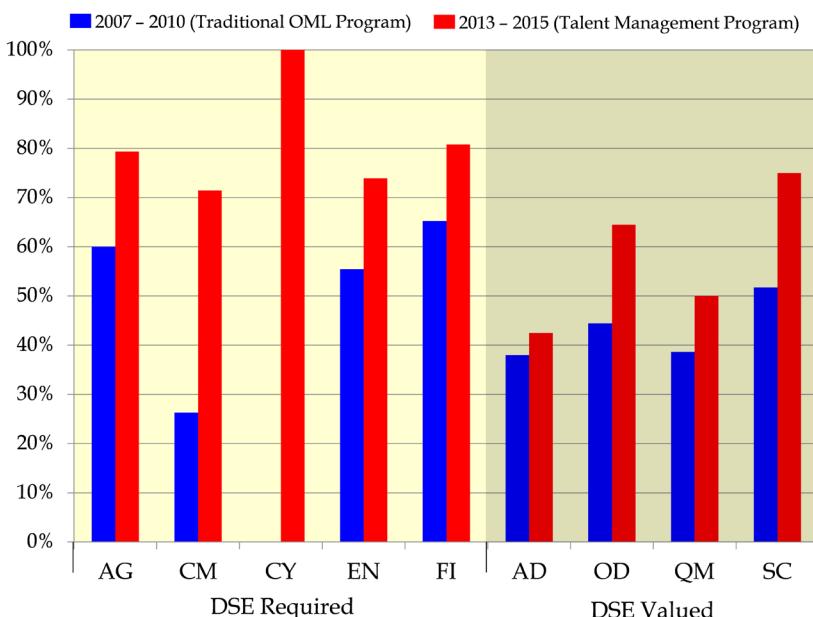


**Figure 8. Share of All West Point Cadets Who Changed Their Top Preferences.**

The pilot program also made significant progress in meeting the talent demands of the branches. Consider Figure 9, for example, which examines those branches placing a premium upon domain specific education (DSE). As a point of comparison, from 2007-2010 during the legacy OML branching process, only 55 percent of West Point cadets commissioned into the Engineer branch possessed ABET-accredited degrees. During the 3-year pilot, however, 74 percent of cadets branched Engineer possessed ABET-accredited degrees, a 19 percentage point increase.

Such improvement was not unique to the Engineer Branch. Four other branches (Adjutant General, Chemical, Cyber, and Finance) now require some domain specific education while four others value it for certain aspects of their work (Air Defense Artillery, Ordnance, Quartermaster, and Signal Corps).

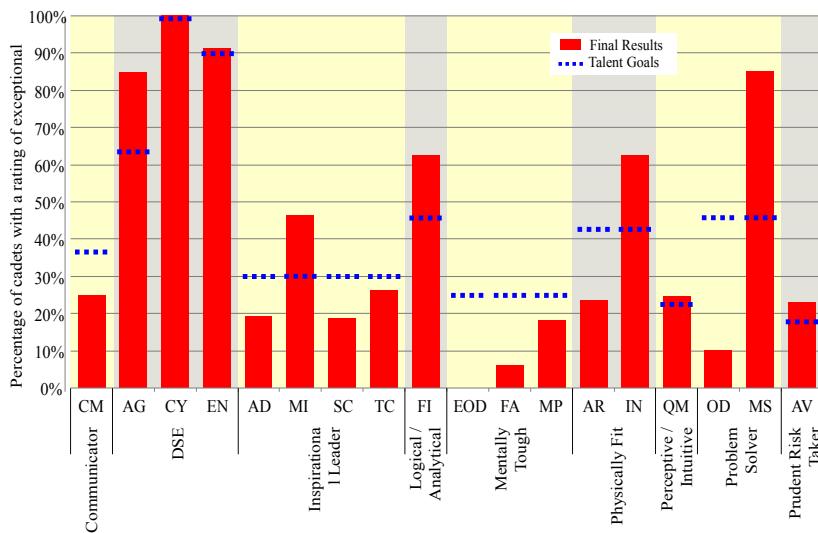
During piloting, every one of these branches recorded increases in domain specific education relative to the legacy branching system. These results all suggest that the new branching program is aligning cadets with the right degrees to the right branches, and also signaling to cadets that they should pursue degrees that best align to their branch preferences.



**Figure 9. Share of West Point Cadets Possessing Domain Specific Education (by Branch).**

While some branches focused heavily upon domain specific education, others established target percentages of new officers assigned to their branch possessing exceptional levels of a centerpiece talent (mental toughness, physical fitness, problem solving, etc.). As Figure 10 demonstrates, in 2015, talent-based branching met or exceeded these goals for 9 of the 17

basic branches. Furthermore, since 2013, the number of branches whose primary talent goals were met rose from 4 to 11.



**Figure 10. Share of West Point Cadets Possessing Primary Talent Requirement by Branch.**

It is important to note the unique challenges associated with meeting the talent priorities of all 17 branches. Considerable constraints exist that prevent the Army from achieving an optimal solution, namely the fact that the branch allocations West Point receives are not perfectly aligned with its cadet talent supply. For example, the Army requires the Academy to commission a minimum of 70 percent of its graduates into the combat arms branches (Air Defense, Aviation, Armor, Engineer, Field Artillery, and Infantry). Those branches, while sharing some talent demands, are highly differentiated. In any given year, a graduating class may have a higher percentage of cadets

better aligned to Field Artillery than to Aviation, for example. In other words, the cadet talent supply is finite and is never going to perfectly align with the dynamically shifting demands of the basic branches. To date, however, talent-based branching has moved the Army much closer to that ideal. We expect that as the program scales across all commissioning sources, the Army will gain additional talent management efficiencies by integrating the varied talent distributions of each into a larger whole.

The increase in both demand side satisfaction (as measured by the number of branches whose primary talent goal was met) and supply side satisfaction (as measured by the percentage of cadets who received their top branch preference) is a unique result of strong incentives embedded in a powerful information marketplace. This market has essentially encouraged cadets to select branches that align well with their talent. In other words, by creating an incentive for branches to communicate their specific talent priorities and for cadets to reveal their unique talent strengths, the Army is best able to match talented officers to specific career fields that should improve the overall productivity of the organization while increasing the satisfaction of the Army and its officers.

## THE WAY AHEAD

“One change always leaves the way open for the establishment of others.”

*Niccolo Machiavelli* <sup>35</sup>

As mentioned previously, based upon the success of talent-based branching at West Point, the Army is scaling the approach across its commissioning sources, making the necessary adaptations for the organizational, resource, and production timeline differences between them.

In OCS, for example, candidates began taking the TAB as part of their pre-commissioning program in 2013, receiving feedback on their talent strengths and weaknesses prior to submitting their branch preferences in mid-program. Candidates are encouraged to use TAB results to help identify the branches to which they are best suited to serve. Additionally, officer candidates may submit a request to be considered outside of the normal OML-method of branch assignment if they possess specific skills, educational background, or work experience that uniquely qualifies them for particular branches. They also prepare a resume, similar to the cadet file created by West Point cadets, highlighting their unique experiences and qualifications for these branches. OCS then convenes a board to consider these specific requests and attempts to best match the talents of these cadets with the needs of the 17 branches. Since OCS adopted this program, 17 percent of cadets selected for active duty have been assigned to branches outside of the typical OML-based method, which will potentially increase the possibility of meeting the specific talent needs of the Army.<sup>36</sup>

The United States Army Cadet Command (US-ACC) is also implementing talent-based branching, and while there are programmatic and resource differences between it and West Point, these commissioning programs are similar enough that most of the branching methodologies piloted at West Point transfer fairly cleanly to ROTC. This spring, for example, ROTC's Class of 2016 gained access to the very same branch education materials provided to West Point cadets. ROTC has also created a robust mentorship network that connects cadets to officers and senior non-commissioned officers across the entire Cadet Command. This provides cadets with advice and mentorship from members of all basic branches, rather than just the three or four represented by the relatively small handful of officers present in their university ROTC detachments. ROTC cadets will also complete a robust resume during this time period, nearly identical to the one completed by West Point cadets, as well as the TAB battery. They will receive TAB feedback, a cadre talent evaluation, and branch recommendations from the Army G1. If properly executed, talent-based branching in ROTC should yield the same benefits for officers and the Army that it did at West Point.

## **Conclusions.**

While many of its personnel policies still require modernization, to its credit the Army has embraced the notion of an officer talent management system, with talent-based branching leading the way. Initial results suggest that it simultaneously generates gains in talent identification and alignment, as well as in officer career satisfaction. These gains highlight the power of preference shifting engendered by carefully

designed and managed information markets. Perhaps as important, talent-based branching helps identify and collect a wealth of junior officer talent data critical to optimizing their future employment and development. This talent data goes far beyond the old academic-military-physical triad of the legacy branching system. And lastly, the program is creating a “new” normal for an entire generation of officers who, over time, will carry talent management with them to the very top of the Army.

The success of talent-based branching also demonstrates that talent management is not “too hard, too costly, too cumbersome, too time consuming, and too private sector.” Put simply, it works. It works because information technology now allows young professionals to post and update their resumes on professional networking sites, search for jobs using online employment websites and, at many firms, negotiate a customized compensation package that aligns with employee preferences while helping the organization beat out its talent competition. The Army is now beginning to do the same.

Talent-based branching also serves as a terrific template for other talent management initiatives recommended by our office, particularly the conduct of Individual Development and Employment Assessment (IDEAs) at key career crossroads throughout officer careers, which would allow the Army to sustain and extend the talent alignment gains made during officer branching.<sup>37</sup> Such full-career, dynamic, and comprehensive assessment of each officer’s talents will reveal a wealth of granular and accurate data. This in turn will allow the Army to institute a host of other personnel management innovations, including compensation and pension redesign, the creation of “tal-

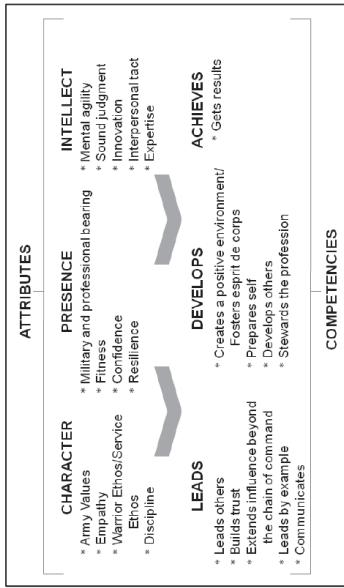
ent pools," and the eventual elimination of officer year group management, which, by its very nature, treats people as interchangeable parts and fails to maximize their productive potential. In other words, the new branching program seems to indicate that a long-awaited revolution in military people management is finally underway. For years, the Army has said that "Soldiers are our centerpiece." Talent management can help give the catch-phrase renewed meaning.

## APPENDIX I - BRANCH STORYBOARDS



ADRP 6-22 Provides the Normative *Baseline* for Officers:  
Talent Management *Builds Upon* that Baseline

According to ADRP 6-22, *Army Leadership*, every officer must possess the baseline attributes (**who an officer is**) and competencies (**what an officer does**) found in Figure 1-1, below. Without them, a person is **not** suited to officership:



**Talent Management** builds upon this normative baseline. It identifies, develops and employs the **unique skills, knowledge and behaviors** **every** officer possesses.

Certified by Branch Commandants. Approved by CAC Commander. Distributed by DCS-G1 DMPM April 2015

<b>INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:</b> Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal.
<b>PHYSICALLY FIT:</b> Physically tough, gritty and tenacious. Performs well even under extreme physiological duress. Committed to a lifestyle of physical fitness.
<b>MENTALLY TOUGH:</b> Stress tolerant and emotionally mature. Performs well even under extreme psychological duress.
<b>DETAIL-FOCUSED:</b> Thorough, perceptive and precise in all matters. Possesses a keen eye - notices everything.
<b>PROCESS DISCIPLINED:</b> Diligently abides by procedures designed to ensure accuracy, effectiveness and safety.
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b> Able to determine requirements, develop work processes, delegate responsibilities, and lead teams to desired outcomes.
<b>INTERDISCIPLINARY:</b> Synthesizes and applies knowledge from multiple disciplines into a coherent overarching perspective.
<b>MULTI-TASKER:</b> Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.
<b>PRUDENT RISK TAKER:</b> Acts boldly yet maintains appropriate focus upon personal, Soldier, and unit safety.
<b>INTERPERSONAL:</b> Skilled in developing appropriate relationships. Able to connect with others to effect positive results.
<b>INTROSPECTIVE:</b> Contemplative by nature - self-aware.
<b>INNOVATIVE:</b> Creative, inquisitive and insightful. Easily identifies new solutions and catalyzes change.
<b>LOGICAL / ANALYTICAL:</b> Uses reason and thinks in terms of cause and effect. Able to deconstruct and solve complex problems.
<b>CROSS-CULTURALLY FLUENT:</b> Aware of and able to operate across different cultural settings (e.g., organizational, demographic, ethnographic, and generational).
<b>PROBLEM SOLVER:</b> Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
<b>COMMUNICATOR:</b> Precise, efficient, and compelling in both written and spoken word.
<b>BODILY KINESTHETIC:</b> Coordinated, dexterous, hands-on person. Keen sense of body and sensory awareness. Learns through physical activity.
<b>PERCEPTIVE:</b> Effectively discerns the deeper meaning or significance of one's observations (e.g., events, people and communication).
<b>SPATIALLY INTELLIGENT:</b> Easily perceives, understands and operates within the multi-dimensional world.
<b>TECHNOLOGICALLY ADEPT:</b> Understands and effectively uses the latest technologies.
<b>DOMAIN-SPECIFIC EDUCATION:</b> Possesses relevant academic disciplines desired by specific branch.

**INTELLIGENCES:** Interpersonal, Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical**SKILLS:**

Air Defense Artillists must have a competitive drive and work both independently and as valuable team members within a complex Joint Interagency Intergovernmental and Multinational (JIMM) environment. They must be inspirational leaders, with sound logical/analytical skills, who can effectively complete multiple tasks simultaneously. Likewise, they must be aware of and comfortable working within the challenging complexities inherent in JIMM operations. Leveraging their technological backgrounds and interpersonal skills, AD Officers must also be able to communicate effectively demands, requirements, and advice with supported units or agencies. They are also self-starters who seek new opportunities to better themselves and their organizations. Given the dispersed yet interconnected nature of Army Air Defense units, officers maintain high levels of fitness (physical and mental) in order to make sound decisions at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Air Defense Artillery branch values officers with academic backgrounds from a wide variety of disciplines and majors. However, the domain-specific disciplines listed below provide officers with the expertise needed to manage the Army's complex air defense systems in any strategic environment.

- **RELEVANT EDUCATION:** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Liberal Arts; Economics; History; Government; International Relations; Foreign Area Studies; Political Science; Psychology; Sociology; Humanities; Foreign Languages; Literature; Broadcasting; Film; Drama; Creative Writing and Interdisciplinary Programs (not all inclusive)
- **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Proven leadership experience (e.g. Team Captain, Club President, Boy Scouts); Intercollegiate Athletics (i.e., team and individual sports); community service (not all inclusive).

**BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

➤ ALERT	➤ COMMITTED	➤ INITIATIVE	➤ PROACTIVE
➤ ASSERTIVE	➤ CRITICALLY THINKING	➤ MOTIVATING	➤ PROBLEM SOLVING
➤ CALM	➤ DEPENDABLE	➤ PERCEPTIVE	➤ RATIONAL
➤ COLLABORATIVE	➤ FIT (PHYS / MENT)	➤ PRECISE	➤ RESILIENT

**TALENT PRIORITIES:**

1. **INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:** Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal.
2. **LOGICAL / ANALYTICAL:** Uses reason and thinks in terms of cause and effect. Able to deconstruct and solve complex problems.
3. **CROSS-CULTURALLY FLUENT:** Aware of and able to operate across different cultural settings (e.g., geographic, demographic, ethnographic, generational, and technological).
4. **MULTI-TASKER:** Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.
5. **COMMUNICATOR:** Precise, efficient, and compelling in both written and spoken word.



# Adjutant General

Year Group 2016

## **INTELLIGENCES:** Interpersonal, Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical

**SKILLS:** Adjutant General (AG) officers manage the Army's most important resource – its people. They must possess the necessary technical and operational expertise to advise commanders on the human dimension of readiness in decisive action. They must be able to comprehend and integrate the organization, structure, and doctrine of the Army as it evolves in the face of rapidly changing situations. They employ automated HR systems and common software applications in order to manage present requirements, prepare for near-term developments, and forecast future requirements. Skilled AG officers effectively communicate in both the written and spoken word.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Adjutant General branch strongly desires officers with academic backgrounds in the domain-specific disciplines listed below. These disciplines best provide officers with the expertise and/or skills necessary to manage more effectively the Army's HR capital.

- **RELEVANT EDUCATION:** Human Resources Management; Public Administration; Business; Sociology; Social Sciences; Psychology; English; History; Political Science; Information Systems/Information Technology; Statistics; Social Sciences; Physical Sciences and Engineering (not all inclusive).

- **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Corporate HR Internship (not all inclusive).

- **RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS / ACCREDITATIONS:** Microsoft Office Suite (not all inclusive).

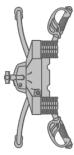
## **BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

- AGILE
- ALERT
- AUTHENTIC
- CALM
- CAREFUL / CAUTIOUS
- CHEERFUL
- COLLABORATIVE
- CRITICALLY THINKING
- CUSTOMER / DETAIL FOCUS
- DIPLOMATIC
- INNOVATIVE
- ENTHUSIASTIC
- FLEXIBLE
- FRIENDLY / HELPFUL
- HONEST / DIRECT
- PROACTIVE
- PRECISE
- PROBLEM SOLVING
- RATIONAL

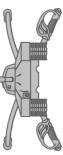
## **TALENT PRIORITIES:**

1. **COMMUNICATOR:** Precise, efficient, and compelling in both written and spoken word.
2. **INTERPERSONAL:** Skilled in developing appropriate relationships. Able to connect with others to effect positive results.
3. **LOGICAL / ANALYTICAL:** Uses reason and thinks in terms of cause and effect. Able to deconstruct and solve complex problems.
4. **PERCEPTIVE:** Effectively discerns the deeper meaning or significance of one's observations (e.g., events, people, and communication).
5. **DOMAIN-SPECIFIC EDUCATION:** Special emphasis on relevant disciplines listed above, or those which require research, analysis of data, and communication of conclusions drawn from that analysis.

# Armor



Year Group 2016



## **INTELLIGENCES:** Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Spatial

**SKILLS:** Armor officers are leaders of teams, expert in combined arms, and reconnaissance and security operations. They possess the technical and tactical competence, social and cultural awareness, and oral and written communications skills needed to cultivate trust and teamwork. Armor officers are responsible for training their units for combat to defeat lethal, adaptive enemies in all types of terrain. Armor Officers lead their tank formations, closing with and destroying the enemy, as well as lead scouts conducting reconnaissance and security. They are physically fit and mentally tough, prepared to succeed under the most adverse conditions. They are leaders who possess a flexibility of mind and the ability to use multiple technologies to devise solutions to complex and dynamic challenges. Armor officers are comfortable making decisions in ambiguous environments, developing courses of action, determining and mitigating risks, then precisely and effectively communicating plans to accomplish the task or mission.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Armor branch desires officers with academic backgrounds that span the entire spectrum of disciplines and majors offered at our nation's undergraduate institutions.

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Leadership role in team athletics; Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT) with Armor or Basic Training / OSUT units; Tank / Scout Pl, Staff Officer, Company / Troop CDR (not all inclusive).

➤ **RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS / ACCREDITATIONS:** Army Reconnaissance Course; Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leaders Course; Cavalry Leaders Course; Ranger; Airborne; Air Assault.

## **BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

- ADAPTABLE
- DISCIPLINED
- AGILE
- DEPENDABLE
- COMMITTED
- FIT (PHYS. / MENT)
- DILIGENT
- HARD WORKING
- INITIATIVE
- MORAL / ETHICAL
- MOTIVATING
- PROACTIVE
- RESILIENT

## **TALENT PRIORITIES:**

1. **PHYSICALLY FIT:** Physically tough, gritty, and tenacious. Performs well even under extreme physiological duress.
2. **MENTALLY TOUGH:** Stress tolerant and emotionally mature. Performs well even under extreme psychological duress.
3. **MULTI-TASKER:** Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.
4. **PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
5. **PRUDENT RISK TAKER:** Acts boldly yet maintains appropriate focus upon personal, Soldier, and unit safety.
6. **COMMUNICATOR:** Precise, efficient, and compelling in both written and spoken word.



# Aviation

Year Group 2016

## INTELLIGENCES: Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Spatial

**SKILLS:** Aviation officers must be able to understand, process, and translate vast amounts of data into understandable concepts. As such, they must master concepts across multiple disciplines (for example, air and ground combat operations) while integrating them into an operational perspective in order to support their maneuver partners. Aviators must also be capable of rapid visualization, possess an acute sensitivity to visual details and spatial relationships, and be able to orient multiple dimensions with ease. They must think creatively and in an innovative and novel fashion, devising solutions and responses to unforeseen challenges in the most effective yet prudent fashion. As a result, Aviation Officers quickly and effectively analyze situations, rapidly process and prioritize requirements and actions, communicate effectively, and make independent and integrity-based decisions.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Aviation branch desires officers with academic backgrounds that span the entire spectrum of disciplines and majors offered at our nation's undergraduate institutions. Broad individual experiences contribute to the success of the branch.

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Cadet Troop Leading Time in combat arms, military intelligence, logistics, or air traffic control; small unit leadership responsibilities requiring independent operations with minimal oversight; leading higher ranking cadets or peers (1SG, CO, etc); leading small teams with an emphasis on communication, problem solving, executing under a stressful timeline; honor / respect leadership (not all inclusive).

➤ **RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS / ACCREDITATIONS:** Civil fixed wing license; Combat Lifesaver; Master Fitness Trainer (not all inclusive).

## BEHAVIORS: (In addition to foundational)

➤ ADAPTABLE	➤ DISCIPLINED	➤ INDEPENDENT	➤ INTELLECTUALLY CURIOUS	➤ PROBLEM SOLVING
➤ AGILE	➤ EXPERT	➤ INITIATIVE	➤ PERCEPTIVE	➤ RISK TAKER (PRUDENT)
➤ CRITICALLY THINKING	➤ FLEXIBLE	➤ INNOVATIVE	➤ PRECISE	➤ STRESS TOLERANT

## TALENT PRIORITIES:

1. **PRUDENT RISK TAKER:** Acts boldly yet maintains appropriate focus upon personnel, Soldier, and unit safety.
2. **INTERPERSONAL:** Skilled in developing appropriate relationships. Able to connect with others to effect positive results.
3. **INTERDISCIPLINARY:** Synthesizes and applies knowledge from multiple disciplines into a coherent overarching perspective.
4. **SPATIALLY INTELLIGENT:** Easily perceives, understands, and operates within the multi-dimensional world.
5. **INNOVATIVE:** Creative, inquisitive, and insightful. Easily identifies new solutions and catalyzes change.
6. **MULTI-TASKER:** Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.

**INTELLIGENCES:** Interpersonal, Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical

**SKILLS:** As valued advisors, Chemical Officers must be articulate, effective, and concise communicators with their commands. The diverse nature of the organizations they support also requires these officers to possess broad knowledge of all branches and how the CBRN Core Competencies can assist those branches. Chemical officers must possess the resident expert knowledge and conceptual understanding to process vast amounts of information in order to prioritize and act on that information. The destructive CBRN threats units confront demand that Chemical Officers be true "sense-makers" and are able to determine the deeper meaning or significance of information. The scope and geographically dispersed nature of the threats they combat require an ability to foster relationships that promote productive work, encourage engagement, and demonstrate presence as a member of a virtual team, communicating and creating value with new technologies and information systems.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Chemical branch strongly desires officers with academic backgrounds in the domain-specific disciplines listed below, with particular emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). These disciplines provide officers with a foundation in the science of CBRN threats and the experience of solving complex problems.

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION:** Applied Sciences & Engineering; Biology; Chemical Engineering; Chemistry; Emergency Management; General Engineering; General Sciences; Life Sciences; Math; Meteorology; Microbiology; Nuclear Engineering; Nuclear Physics; Acquisition / Contract Management; Physical Sciences; Emergency and Disaster Management, and Homeland Security (not all inclusive).

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT) with Chemical Unit; Leadership Position in Science-Related Club; Academic Enrichment Program in chemical (or related field) research activities (not all inclusive).

**BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

➤ ADAPTABLE	➤ COLLABORATIVE
➤ AGILE	➤ COMMITTED
➤ ALERT	➤ CONFIDENT
➤ ASSERTIVE	➤ CRITICALLY THINKING
➤ AWARE	➤ DETAIL FOCUSED

➤ FLEXIBLE	➤ HARD WORKING
➤ INNOVATIVE	➤ PROACTIVE
➤ PROBLEM SOLVING	➤ STRESS TOLERANT

**TALENT PRIORITIES:**

1. **COMMUNICATOR:** Precise, efficient, and compelling in both written and spoken word.
2. **DOMAIN-SPECIFIC EDUCATION:** Focus on relevant disciplines listed above, with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines.
3. **PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
4. **INTERPERSONAL:** Skilled in developing appropriate relationships. Able to connect with others to effect positive results.
5. **PERCEPTIVE:** Effectively discerns the deeper meaning or significance of one's observations (e.g. events, people, communication).
6. **MULTI-TASKER:** Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.



# Cyber



## INTELLIGENCES: Logical-Mathematical, Linguistic, Spatial, Interpersonal

**SKILLS:** Cyber officers must be innovative, inspirational, and intellectually curious leaders who are capable of applying the art and science of the profession of arms within the cyberspace warfighting domain using both offensive and defensive cyberspace operations tactics, techniques, and procedures. They must be technically versed and passionate in understanding the cyberspace domain in a multi-dimensional sense to leverage bleeding-edge technologies and highly, technically-skilled teams that can provide operational commanders a unique effects capability for defending our nation against emerging cyber threats. They must also effectively be able to articulate cyberspace operations and capabilities to operational commanders and to integrate these capabilities and effects into combined arms, joint, and coalition warfare operations across joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIM) environments.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Cyber branch values officers with academic backgrounds from a select range of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) disciplines and majors. The domain-specific disciplines listed below provide officers with the expertise needed to manage cyberspace operations.

- **RELEVANT EDUCATION:** Computer Science; Computer Engineering; Computer Systems & Technology; Cyber Security; Electrical Engineering; Information Systems; Mathematical Sciences; Cyberspace Operations.
- **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Cyber Leader Development Program (CLDP); Cadet-Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT) with cyber units; industry / hacking conference participation; globally recognized, industry provided information technology related certifications; academic enrichment programs or internships with higher education / research / and government agencies.

## BEHAVIORS: (In addition to foundational)

AGILE	CRITICALLY THINKING	DISCIPLINED	PROBLEM SOLVING
AMBITIONOUS	DETAIL FOCUSED	EXPERT	RATIONAL
COLLABORATIVE	DILIGENT	INITIATIVE	RESILIENT
CONFIDENT	DIRECTIVE	INNOVATIVE	VISIONARY

## TALENT PRIORITIES:

1. **DOMAIN-SPECIFIC EDUCATION:** Possesses relevant academic disciplines desired by specific branch.
2. **TECHNOLOGICALLY ADEPT:** Understands and effectively uses the latest technologies.
3. **INNOVATIVE:** Creative, inquisitive and insightful. Easily identifies new solutions and catalyzes change.
4. **INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:** Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal.
5. **PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
6. **LOGICAL / ANALYTICAL:** Uses reason and thinks in terms of cause and effect. Able to deconstruct and solve complex problems.



# Engineer

Year Group 2016

## **INTELLIGENCES:** Interpersonal, Logical-Mathematical, Spatial

**SKILLS:** Engineer officers must possess an innate ability to evaluate and assess problems, the resident knowledge to brainstorm possibilities, and then quickly implement solutions to solve problems facing our maneuver commanders. This requires a design mindset – the ability to develop tasks and work processes for teams and motivate those teams to reach harmoniously, efficiently, and effectively desired outcomes. Officers must thrive in the world of abstract concepts and data-based reasoning, be able to discriminate and filter information of importance, and be capable of rapid visualization; all while skilfully possessing the ability to communicate concepts verbally or in writing. Collectively, these skills make Engineer officers superb problem solvers and invaluable to our Army and Nation.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Engineer branch strongly desires officers with academic backgrounds in the domain-specific disciplines listed below, with particular emphasis on degrees that are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). These disciplines provide officers with a foundation in the scientific method that enhances their ability to become expert problem solvers.

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 1:** ABET Engineering Majors (Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Systems, Environmental, Chemical, Nuclear, Engineering Management, Computer Science, Information Technology).

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 2:** Non-ABET Engineering; Science, Technology, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 3:** All other disciplines.

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING EXPERIENCE:** Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT) with Engineer Unit or Academic Enrichment Program in engineering or related activity (not all inclusive).

## **BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

- ADAPTABLE
- DEPENDABLE
- AMBITIOUS
- DETAILED FOCUSED
- CHARISMATIC
- DILIGENT
- COMMITTED
- EXPERT
- INNOVATIVE
- INSPIRING
- INTELLECTUALLY CURIOUS
- PERCEPTIVE
- PROACTIVE
- PROBLEM SOLVING
- TENACIOUS
- VISIONARY

## **TALENT PRIORITIES:**

1. **DOMAIN-SPECIFIC EDUCATION:** Possessing an engineering degree (ABET-preferred), high performers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines.
2. **PROJECT MANAGER:** Able to determine requirements, develop work processes, delegate responsibilities, and lead teams to desired outcomes.
3. **PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
4. **INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:** Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal.
5. **SPATIALLY INTELLIGENT:** Easily perceives, understands, and operates within the multi-dimensional world.



# Field Artillery

Year Group 2016

## **INTELLIGENCES:** Bodily-Kinesthetic, Logical-Mathematical, Spatial

**SKILLS:** Field Artillery Officers are leaders who are integral members of the joint and combined arms team. They are mentally tough, physically fit, leaders of character able to perform with a high level of competence under difficult circumstances while keeping pace with maneuver. Field Artillery Officers are responsible for training their units for combat and integrating fires in combat to defeat lethal, adaptive enemy combatants in any operational environment. Practitioners of the art and science of war, they are creative thinkers who solve problems through their adept application of concepts across multiple disciplines (joint operations, joint fires, and combined arms maneuver). Field Artillery officers are self-starters who routinely and rapidly process and prioritize multiple demands in multiple dimensions. Field Artillery officers effectively communicate those demands and solutions to supported commanders at all echelons. These skills, coupled with their high degree of confidence, enable outstanding trust and effective relationships that exist among the joint community, the Fires team, and their senior Maneuver Commanders.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Field Artillery branch desires officers with academic backgrounds that span the entire spectrum of disciplines and majors offered at our nation's undergraduate institutions. Broad individual experiences contribute to the success of the branch.

- **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Proven leadership experience in athletics, student government, dynamic/ multi-functional teams; Joint Service Exchange Training, Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT/ CLDT) with any combat arms unit; prior joint or combat arms enlisted experience (not all inclusive).
- **RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS / ACCREDITATIONS:** Mastery of tactical fundamentals as demonstrated in military art and science classroom instruction and training evaluations; Master Fitness Trainer; Combatives; Airborne, Air Assault; Ranger (not all inclusive).

## **BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

- ADAPTABLE ➤ COMMITTED ➤ DISCIPLINED ➤ FLEXIBLE ➤ PRECISE ➤ TENACIOUS
- ALERT ➤ CONFIDENT ➤ DYNAMIC ➤ INITIATIVE ➤ PROBLEM SOLVER ➤ TEAM ORIENTED
- AUDACIOUS ➤ CRITICAL THINKER ➤ EXPERT ➤ INNOVATIVE ➤ RESILIENT ➤ VISIONARY
- CHARISMATIC ➤ DETERMINED ➤ FIT (PHYS / MENT) ➤ MISSION ORIENTED ➤ STRESS TOLERANT

## **TALENT PRIORITIES:**

1. **MENTALLY TOUGH:** Stress tolerant and emotionally mature. Performs well even under extreme psychological duress.
2. **PHYSICALLY FIT:** Physically tough, gritty, and tenacious. Performs well even under extreme physiological duress. Committed to a lifestyle of physical fitness.
3. **INTERDISCIPLINARY:** Synthesizes and applies knowledge from multiple disciplines into a coherent overarching perspective.
4. **PROCESS DISCIPLINED:** Diligently abides by procedures designed to ensure accuracy, effectiveness, and safety.
5. **MULTI-TASKER:** Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.
6. **SPATIALLY INTELLIGENT:** Easily perceives, understands, and operates within the multi-dimensional world.



# Financial Management

Year Group 2016

## **INTELLIGENCES:** Interpersonal, Logical-Mathematical

**SKILLS:** Financial Management (FM) officers provide responsible management of government resources through the execution of management controls, which promote effective governance. They must handle vast amounts of FM information and engage in both abstract and analytical reasoning. They must have the requisite knowledge and understanding of general accounting principles and the use of information technology systems to complete their tasks and inform cost-based decision making. Financial Managers must also be able to find creative solutions to problems beyond those that are rote or rule-based, yet ensure that they comply with applicable laws and regulations. Virtually or in person, they must be articulate, effective, and concise communicators. Due to the diverse nature of the units they support, FM officers must effectively communicate, in operational terms, the financial management impacts of leader decisions.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Financial Management branch strongly desires officers with academic backgrounds in the domain-specific disciplines listed below. These disciplines provide officers with a foundation in the general accounting and financial principles required to manage the Army's resources effectively and efficiently.

➢ **RELEVANT EDUCATION:** Accounting; Banking; Business Administration & Management; Economics; Finance; Financial Management; Acquisition / Contract Management; Computer Sciences; Information Systems; Statistics (not all inclusive).

➢ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT) with DIV / BDE G-8/S-8; FM Support Unit; FM Support Detachment; Academic Enrichment Program with private sector comptroller; banking or related financial regulatory authority (not all inclusive).

## **BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

ADAPTIVE	CONSCIENTIOUS	DISCIPLINED	HARD WORKING	RATIONAL
ALERT	COOPERATIVE	DUTIFUL	PROBLEM SOLVING	RESPONSIBLE
ASSERTIVE	CUSTOMER FOCUSED	ETHICAL / MORAL	PRECISE	STABLE
COMMITTED	DILIGENT	EXPERT	PRUDENT	TRUSTWORTHY

## **TALENT PRIORITIES:**

1. **DOMAIN-SPECIFIC EDUCATION:** Focus on relevant disciplines listed above, with a special emphasis on accounting, business administration, or financial management, which provide the necessary skills for FM officers to effectively and efficiently manage the Army's resources.
2. **LOGICAL / ANALYTICAL:** Uses reason and thinks in terms of cause and effect. Able to deconstruct and solve complex problems.
3. **PROCESS DISCIPLINED:** Diligently abides by procedures designed to ensure accuracy, effectiveness, and safety.
4. **DETAIL FOCUSED:** Thorough, perceptive, and precise in all matters. Possesses a keen eye – notices everything.
5. **COMMUNICATOR:** Precise, efficient, and compelling in both written and spoken word.
6. **PROJECT MANAGER:** Able to determine requirements, develop work processes, delegate responsibilities, and lead teams to desired outcomes.

# Infantry



Year Group 2016

## **INTELLIGENCES:** Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Spatial

**SKILLS:** Infantry Officers must be able to operate in some of the most politically, economically, and environmentally adverse situations while at different threat levels. In order to operate in such environments, Infantry Officers must possess the highest levels of mental toughness, problem solving ability, and physical fitness. Using creativity and sound judgment, they must have the ability to devise and prioritize solution sets rapidly, motivate and employ Soldiers, and have an innate ability to adapt to fluid situations when facing any enemy across the entire threat spectrum. Additionally, Infantry Officers must have the ability to discriminate an action out of the norm and respond with the appropriate level of action. They must also demonstrate consistent command of these skills over extended periods of time.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Infantry branch desires officers with academic backgrounds that span the entire spectrum of disciplines and majors offered at our nation's undergraduate institutions. Broad individual experiences contribute to the success of the branch.

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Leadership role in athletics / student government; Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTL T / CLDT) with Infantry units. Overseas Academic Enrichment Program. Prior enlisted service in a Maneuver Branch. Contact Sports / Ecomthon / Ultra Marathon Competitor; Coaching / Mentoring Experience (not all inclusive).

➤ **RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS / ACCREDITATIONS:** EMT / First Responder Training; Cross Fit Instructor; PADI Cert; Free Fall; highest level of scouting (not all inclusive).

## **BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

- ADAPTABLE
- DISCIPLINED
- ASSERTIVE
- DUTIFUL
- CONFIDENT
- ETHICAL / MORAL
- DILIGENT
- FIT (PHYS / MENT)

- MENTALLY AGILE
- HONORABLE
- INNOVATIVE
- PERSONAL COURAGE
- RESPECTFUL
- INTEGRITY
- LOYAL
- SELFLESS SERVICE

## **TALENT PRIORITIES:**

1. **MENTALLY TOUGH:** Stress tolerant and emotionally mature. Performs well even under extreme psychological duress.
2. **PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
3. **PHYSICALLY FIT:** Physically tough, gritty, and tenacious. Performs well even under extreme physiological duress. Committed to a lifestyle of physical fitness.
4. **INNOVATIVE:** Creative, inquisitive, and insightful. Easily identifies new solutions and catalyzes change.
5. **MULTI-TASKER:** Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.
6. **BODILY-KINESTHETIC:** Coordinated, dexterous, hands-on person. Keen sense of body and sensory awareness. Learns through physical activity.

**INTELLIGENCES:** Logical-Mathematical, Interpersonal, Linguistic

**SKILLS:** Military Intelligence officers must be able to synthesize a wealth of information and determine what is occurring or about to occur and effectively communicate its significance both verbally and in writing. They must solve intelligence-related problems using a variety of intelligence systems, techniques, and procedures. The MI Officer is inherently perceptive and has a high level of intuition that compliment exceptional research, investigative and reasoning skills. They must also possess the confidence to make tough decisions in a timely manner. They must be able to productively lead Soldiers and work effectively with fellow officers and civilians. MI Officers are also skilled at analyzing different cultures and threats (geographic, demographic, ethnographic, etc.) and take an interdisciplinary approach of “understanding blue” yet “thinking red” across multiple intelligence disciplines.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Military Intelligence branch values officers with academic backgrounds from a wide variety of disciplines and majors. However, the domain-specific disciplines listed below provide officers with the expertise needed to integrate vast amounts of information in the appropriate cultural context to better understand the significance.

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION:** Global Security & Intelligence Studies; Information Operations; Information Technology; Computer Systems and Technology; International Relations; Economics; Cultural or Historical Geography; English; Foreign Language / Area Studies; History; Geopolitics; Political Science; Operations Research; Religion (list not all inclusive).

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Cadet / Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTL / CLDT) with intelligence organizations and units (not all inclusive). Cultural fluency via overseas travel or immersion in foreign studies (regional/heritage basis).  
➤ **RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS / ACCREDITATIONS:** Foreign language proficiency (2/2/1+).

**BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

➤ ALERT	➤ CRITICALLY THINKING
➤ CALM	➤ DETAIL-FOCUSED
➤ COLLABORATIVE	➤ DILIGENT
➤ CONFIDENT	➤ DISCIPLINED

➤ PRECISE	➤ REFLECTIVE
➤ INNOVATIVE	➤ STRESS TOLERANT
➤ INQUISITIVE	➤ THOUGHTFUL
➤ INTELLECTUALLY CURIOUS	
➤ PERCEPTIVE	

**TALENT DEMANDS:**

1. **INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:** Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal.
2. **PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to devise solutions and responses beyond that which is rote or rule-based.
3. **COMMUNICATOR:** Precise, efficient, and compelling use of the written and spoken word, particularly via information technology systems.
4. **INTERDISCIPLINARY:** Synthesizes and applies knowledge from multiple disciplines into a coherent overarching perspective.
5. **PERCEPTIVE:** Able to determine the true significance of what is transpiring.
6. **LOGICAL / ANALYTICAL:** The ability to reason, sequence, think in terms of cause and effect and create hypotheses. Dependent upon intellectual curiosity, inquisitiveness, and a desire to seek the deeper meaning in a situation.



# Quartermaster

Year Group 2016

## INTELLIGENCES: Logical-Mathematical, Interpersonal, Linguistic, Spatial

**SKILLS:** Leadership in materiel management, logistics automation, field services, petroleum and water operations, aerial delivery, and mortuary affairs requires Quartermaster officers to be leaders and managers who can develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes. They must be innovators, able to devise solutions and prioritize responses beyond that which is rote or rule-based. Given their worldwide missions, these officers must be adept at virtual collaboration - work productively, drive engagement, and display presence as a member of a team using management information systems. Perhaps most importantly, Quartermaster officers must be customer-focused, as sustainment enables operational reach and freedom of maneuver.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Quartermaster branch values officers with academic backgrounds from a wide variety of disciplines and majors. However, the domain-specific disciplines listed below provide officers with the expertise needed to successfully execute the military's system of logistics management.

➢ **RELEVANT EDUCATION:** Supply Chain Management; Logistics Management; Distribution Management; Operations Management; Business Administration & Management; Acquisition / Contract Management; Petroleum Engineering; Accounting; Management Information Systems; Transportation Management; General Management; Computer Systems & Technology; Engineering Management; Geology; Geophysics; Environmental Management (not all inclusive).

➢ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT) with an Army Logistics unit, Academic Individual Advanced Development in management/logistics or academic institutions, Lean Six Sigma, sports parachuting, rappelling (not all inclusive).

➢ **RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS / ACCREDITATIONS:** Certified Professional in Supply Management, Certified Professional Logistician, Supply Chain Management Certificate, SAP Certification Certification in Transportation & Logistics/Environmental Mgmt (not all inclusive).

## BEHAVIORS: (In addition to foundational)

➢ ADAPTABLE	➢ COMPASSIONATE	➢ DISCIPLINED	➢ FLEXIBLE	➢ RESPONSIVE
➢ ALERT	➢ CUSTOMER-FOCUSED	➢ DYNAMIC	➢ HARD WORKING	➢ RESPONSIBLE
➢ SITUATIONAL AWARENESS	➢ DEPENDABLE	➢ ETHICAL - MORAL	➢ PRECISE	➢ STRESS TOLERANT
➢ COLLABORATIVE	➢ PROACTIVE	➢ EXPERT	➢ PROBLEM SOLVING	➢ INNOVATIVE

## TALENT PRIORITIES:

1. **PERCEPTIVE:** Effectively discerns the deeper meaning or significance of one's observations (e.g., events, people and communication).
2. **PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
3. **PROJECT MANAGER:** Able to determine requirements, develop work processes, delegate responsibilities, and lead teams to desired outcomes.
4. **MULTI-TASKER:** Rapidly processes and prioritizes multiple demands simultaneously. Takes appropriate action.
5. **COMMUNICATOR:** Precise, efficient, and compelling in both written and spoken word.



# Signal



## **INTELLIGENCES:** Interpersonal, Logical-Mathematical, Spatial

**SKILLS:** Signal officers must possess the capability to be inspirational leaders in any organization as well as the ability to plan, build, secure, operate, maintain, and defend the cyber domain. They must be technologically adept and skilled at leveraging the latest technologies and business practices while also being innovators who develop new solutions that meet the changing needs of their superiors. Signal officers must be able to build and lead effective teams as well as clearly articulate the highly-technical components of the signal and cyber community into operational terms their supported commanders can understand and from which can make effective decisions and direct action. They are capable of rapid visualization, possess an acute sensitivity to visual details and spatial relationships, and are able to orient to three dimensions with ease. Collectively, these talents make Signal officers superb problem solvers and leaders.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The Signal branch values Officers with academic backgrounds from a wide variety of disciplines and majors. However, the domain-specific disciplines listed below provide officers with the expertise needed to manage information and deliver effective communications.

➤ **RELEVANT EDUCATION:** Organizational Leadership/Management; Applied Sciences & Engineering; Computer Engineering; Computer Science; Computer Systems & Technology; Electrical Engineering; Engineering Management; Information Operations; Information Systems; Information System Security / Assurance; Mathematical Sciences; Systems Engineering (not all inclusive).

➤ **RELEVANT TRAINING / EXPERIENCE:** Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT); Academic Enrichment Program with higher education / research agency in degree field of study (not all inclusive).

### **BEHAVIORS:** (In addition to foundational)

ADAPTABLE	CAREFUL	DILIGENT	INITIATIVE	PROACTIVE
AGILE	COMMITTED	DISCIPLINED	INNOVATIVE	RATIONAL
ALERT	CONFIDENT	EXPERT	PRECISE	RESILIENT
BALANCED	DETAIL-FOCUSED	FLEXIBLE	PROBLEM SOLVING	STABLE

### **TALENT PRIORITIES:**

- 1. INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:** Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal.
- 2. INNOVATIVE:** Creative, insightful, and innovative. Easily identifies new solutions and catalyzes change.
- 3. TECHNOLOGICALLY ADEPT:** Understands and comfortably uses the latest technologies.
- 4. PROBLEM SOLVER:** Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
- 5. PROJECT MANAGER:** Able to determine requirements, develop work processes, delegate responsibilities, and lead teams to desired outcomes.

## ENDNOTES

1. Mark Stevens, *Extreme Management: What They Teach at Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program*, New York: Warner Books, Inc., 2001, p. 51.
2. Williams characterizes disruptive thinking as a five-stage process: craft a disruptive hypothesis; define a disruptive market opportunity; generate several disruptive ideas; shape them into a single, disruptive solution; and make a disruptive pitch that will persuade internal or external stakeholders to invest in or adopt what you have created. See Luke Williams, *Disrupt: Think the Unthinkable to Transform Your Business*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2010.
3. For a discussion of the challenges and opportunities in creating an officer corps strategy, see Casey Wardynski, David S. Lyle, and Michael J. Colarusso, *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: A Proposed Human Capital Model Focused on Talent*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009, available from [www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=912](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=912).
4. For a detailed analysis of the Army's officer retention woes, see Casey Wardynski, David S. Lyle, and Michael J. Colarusso, *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Retaining Talent*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010, available from [www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=965](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=965).
5. Today's defense budget austerity and constant headlines detailing the previously unanticipated capabilities of potential adversaries did not hurt either.
6. Fredrick William Faber, *Notes on Doctrinal and Spiritual Subjects*, Vol. II, London, UK: Burns and Oates, 1866.
7. The Army's 17 basic branches are: Adjutant General, Air Defense Artillery, Armor, Aviation, Chemical, Engineer, Cyber, Field Artillery, Finance, Infantry, Medical Service, Military Intelligence, Military Police, Ordnance, Quartermaster, Signal, and Transportation.

8. In West Point's classes of 2003-2008, 66 percent of the cadets who received one of their top three branch preferences remained on active duty through at least 6 years, while only 54 percent of the cadets who received other than one of their top three branch preferences remained for the same period of time.

9. While this degree may serve an officer well in the comparatively small Military Police branch, the other 16 branches might be better served if ROTC was producing fewer criminal justice majors. To that end, beginning in 2011, ROTC cadets who received degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math disciplines earned additional incentive points to determine their place in the national Order of Merit List (OML).

10. The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) specifies minimum curricular requirements for various engineering programs. Accreditation is awarded at the program rather than institution level, so a university could offer some engineering degrees that were ABET accredited and others that were not. ABET accredited engineering degrees are valued because they provide a common prerequisite to receiving a professional engineer license. For West Point's graduating classes of 2007-2010, 43 percent of cadets who indicated engineer as their top preference majored in non-ABET accredited academic programs. Of those cadets **selected** for service as engineers, 45 percent of them majored in non-ABET accredited academic programs.

11. The management of this market requires cooperation between the Army Personnel Office and each of the Army's three sources of commission (ROTC, OCS, and West Point). At present, each source of commission independently manages the assignment mechanism for cadets in their command.

12. The board integrates information from three sources. Basic branch allocations (the number of new officers required by each) are provided by the Department of the Army's personnel office, or G1. Talent demands are provided by each basic branch "proponent" (the headquarters of each, best equipped to articulate the particular talents its new officers must possess). Lastly, the board has access to the full range of talent supply information furnished by cadets/candidates. Using this information, the board validates initial branch assignments using well-informed cadet preferences and class standing. It then conducts a final review and makes

any last adjustments needed to ensure both branch demands and cadet preferences are satisfied to the greatest extent possible.

13. Larry Chang, ed., *Wisdom for the Soul: Five Millennia of Prescriptions for Spiritual Healing*, Washington, DC: Gnosophia Publishers, 2006, p. 658.

14. Casey Wardynski, David S. Lyle, and Michael J. Colarusso, *Talent: Implications for a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010, p. v, available from [www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=948](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=948).

15. Howard Gardner's groundbreaking work in multiple intelligences is a critical component of our talent taxonomy. The most recent version of his multiple intelligence theory includes verbal-linguistic, mathematical-logical, musical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential intelligence.

16. It is important to note that as the program expands to include all classes of cadets, these phases will take place earlier in each cadet's experience (beginning in the fall semester of their freshman year) and they will unfold over a 3-year period.

17. Survey results from the Classes of 2013-2015 indicate that 89 percent of cadets found the branch storyboards containing the detailed lists of desired talents for each branch to be helpful when ordering their branch preferences. Only branch mission was more influential (97 percent). Potential for career progression, deployment opportunities, family considerations, and peer influences were cited as less influential.

18. The Deputy Chief of Staff of Personnel (Army G1) is in charge of all Army personnel programs and policy.

19. Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership*, identifies the leadership attributes and competencies required of all commissioned officers, using the Leadership Requirements Model.

20. The basic branch abbreviations are: Air Defense Artillery (AD), Adjutant General (AG), Armor (AR), Aviation (AV),

Chemical Corps (CM), Cyber Electromagnetic (CY), Engineers (EN), Field Artillery (FA), Financial Management (FM), Infantry (IN), Military Intelligence (MI), Military Police, (MP), Medical Service (MS), Ordnance (OD), Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), Quartermaster (QM), Signal Corps (SC), and Transportation Corps (TC).

21. This approach stands in stark contrast to legacy Army branch videos, which were plagued by inconsistent formats and production values and generally had a heavy handed recruiting flavor, focusing upon “hooah” weapons systems and explosions rather than presenting information leading to informed career decisionmaking.

22. This participation incentive applies equally to the demand side, the Army’s basic branches.

23. Making sound use of TAB results requires a careful consideration of the absolute and relative nature of each talent. Consider, for example, a cadet who scores 290 out of 300 possible points on the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). Against the existing *absolute* standard (300 points), this cadet appears to be very physically fit. However, for a branch demanding the most exceptionally fit officers possible, a 290 may be a *relatively* low score, as many cadets routinely exceed the performance levels needed to score 300 on the APFT. The balance between absolute and relative talents is an important aspect of the branching program. The fixed nature of branch allocations and the desire to meet the needs of the Army demand careful attention to talents measured in absolute terms. However, the requirement to deliver feedback that maximizes the chances of internalization and growth, as well as common perceptions of talent benchmarks (e.g., a cadet scoring a 290 on the APFT is physically fit), requires recognition of existing absolute standards and norms.

24. This is common practice in college level standardized testing (for example, Scholastic Aptitude Test [SAT] results) and is thus familiar to cadets.

25. Survey results indicate that about a third of cadets find the TAB feedback to be helpful.

26. While initially administered at the end of their junior year, future cadets will take the TAB during their first freshman semester to provide earlier developmental feedback, and provide a talent baseline upon initial entry into the commissioning program. They will also continue to take it during the end of their junior year for use in the branching process.

27. Moving forward, these evaluations will include counseling sessions on each assessment and will be completed each year for each cadet by the Cadre. They will be integrated into the cadet evaluation system so that cadets receive evaluations from the perspective of multiple leaders with whom they come into contact.

28. Preferences are considered because a cadet who by talent is a perfect fit for Engineers, yet by preference is hell-bent on the Air Defense Artillery, is less likely to enjoy serving as an Engineer. This is a reasonably rare occurrence, as preferences and talents tend to strongly correlate—people generally like to do what they do well.

29. Since 2013, West Point has collected preferences from females for all basic branches to include Infantry and Armor, which may be useful in the future as these branches become available to females with the Soldier 2020 and gender integration initiatives.

30. At West Point, a cadet's final performance score consists of a weighted average of the cadet's cumulative performance in three domains: academic (55 percent weight), military (30 percent weight), and physical (15 percent weight). West Point rank orders cadets by this weighted average to produce the OML. In the OML model, cadets receive branches based on their preferences and OML position, with a few exceptions (e.g., branch allocations, medical eligibility, Career Satisfaction Programs, branch detail, etc.). The ROTC and OCS models differ somewhat from this assignment mechanism.

31. Ultimately however, while cadet preferences are important signals, the talent-based branching program prioritizes Army needs over individual preferences. While gains can be made in both areas, there will be times when Army needs trump cadet preferences.

32. OCS conducted a pilot in the summer of 2013, and ROTC conducted their first pilot in the fall of 2015.

33. Over the next 5-10 years we plan to conduct, in collaboration with ARI and TRADOC, a detailed longitudinal validation of the Talent-Based Branching Program. The validation will include additional assessments of officers at important career crossroads (e.g., Captain's Career Course), analysis of service continuation and functional area transfer decisions, and analysis of branch performance among other items. Important comparisons can be made between the pilot West Point population and the legacy West Point population as well as with ROTC cadets and OCS candidates.

34. A t-test resulted in a statistically significant p-value of 0.0081.

35. Niccolo Machiavelli, *Il Principe (The Prince)*, 1532.

36. As of OCS Class 003-15, 294 candidates from six classes requested to be assigned to basic branches based on their unique qualifications and 49 of the 294 candidates were approved.

37. For a complete discussion of the IDEA concept, see Michael J. Colarusso and David S. Lyle, *Senior Officer Talent Management: Fostering Institutional Adaptability*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2014, Chapter 4, available from [www.strategic-studiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1188](http://www.strategic-studiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1188).

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**Director**  
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**Dr. Steven K. Metz**

**Author**  
**Lieutenant Colonel Michael J. Colarusso,**  
**U.S. Army Retired**  
**Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth G. Heckel**  
**Colonel David S. Lyle**  
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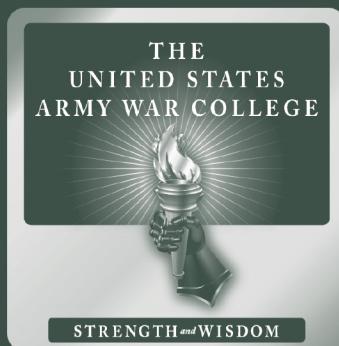
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